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VOL. IX.
BIRMAN EMPIRE, VOL. II.



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AN
ACCOUNT OF AN EMBASSY
TO
THE KINGDOM OF AVA
IN THE YEAR 1795.

BY
LIEUT-COLONEL MICHAEL SYMES;

TO WHICH IS NOW ADDED,

A NARRATIVE
OF THE
LATE MILITARY AND POLITICAL OPERATIONS
IN
THE BIRMESE EMPIRE.

WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THE
COUNTRY, ITS MANNERS, CUSTOMS, AND INHABITANTS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

CHAPTER II.

Place of Residence described—Invasion from
China Previous—New Imperial—Military Build-
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EDINBURGH:

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EMBASSY

TO

AVA.

CHAPTER I.

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RESIDENCE OF THE BRITISH DEPUTATION,
AND RECEPTION ON OUR LANDING.

AT nine o'clock in the morning of the 11th of July, I took possession of the royal barge with ceremonious formality, accompanied by the Woon-dock and Baba-Sheen. The platform on the outside contained space for thirty-two rowers, sixteen on each side; but on this occasion the oars were not fastened, as it was meant to be drawn by war-boats. The inside was divided into three small apartments, handsomely fitted up; the roof and sides were lined with white cotton, and the floor covered with carpets and fine mats. I proceeded in this barge till one o'clock, and then returned to my own boat, which was a much more convenient, though less dignified conveyance.

After leaving Neoundah, the eastern bank of the river rises to a perpendicular height, eighty or one hundred feet above the river. In the side of the cliff, rather more than half way up, we saw some apertures resembling doorways, and were told that they were entrances into caves which had formerly been inhabited by hermits, who, desirous of withdrawing from the world, had excavated these abodes with their own hands, and dwelt in them for the remainder of their lives, preserving no farther intercourse with their fellow-creatures than what was necessary to receive their food, which was lowered down to them by a rope. The Birmans do not inflict on themselves disgusting tortures after the manner of the Hindoos; but they deem it meritorious to mortify the flesh, by the voluntary penance of abstemiousness and self-denial. Solitary seclusion has, at some period or other, been accounted praiseworthy in most countries. During the reign of monkish superstition, it prevailed very commonly throughout Europe.

Our legendary tales are not wholly unfounded. The Hermit of Warkworth is said to have had its origin from a fact. Birmans, however, though bigoted, are not gloomy, and are in general blessed with a disposition too cheerful to retire from the world in hopeless despondency, or sullen discontent.

Our journey this day was slow, and we perceived little that differed from what has already been described. The islands formed by the river were long, and succeeded each other with such small intervals, that the full breadth of the river, from bank to bank, seldom could be seen. We judged it to be in most places three miles wide. Our boats kept near the eastern shore, and passed, on that side, the towns of Sirraykioum and Gner-routoh. During the latter part of the day, the country seemed fertile, and the soil richer than in the neighbourhood of Pagahm. The number of inhabitants and cattle denoted a considerable population. In the evening we brought to near Shwayedong, a small but neat town, containing about 300 houses ranged in a regular street. Each dwelling had a small garden, fenced with a bamboo railing. Two monasteries and a few small temples did not claim particular notice; but the tall and wide-spreading trees that overshadowed them were objects of pleasing contemplation.

On the next day, July 12th, we continued our journey, sometimes going fast, at others slow and with difficulty, as the wind favoured us, the reaches of the river winding so much that we had it on all quarters. Keozee, on the eastern side, was the place of most consequence, and was ornamented with several neat temples. At half-past

five in the evening I went on shore, and found the adjacent country divided into fields, which, at a proper season, are cultivated. The remains of a tobacco plantation, that had produced a crop in the former year, were yet lying on the ground. Detached hills appeared to the eastward. We brought to, and spent the night near a small village called Toucheac, to the north of Yebbay. Here the inhabitants get their livelihood by selling Læpac, or pickled tea-leaf, of which the Birmans are extremely fond. The plant, I was informed, grows at a place called Palong-miou, a district to the north-east of Ummerapoora. It is very inferior to the tea produced in China, and is seldom used but as a pickle.

On the following day we kept close to the eastern shore, and the breadth of the river being in most places from three to five miles, it was not easy minutely to distinguish objects on the western bank. The country, as we advanced north, increased in population, and improved in agriculture. The land every where indicated a deficiency of rain, being parched, and broken into deep fissures, owing to the want of moisture. We understood that the season had been remarkably dry. Rain, however, was shortly expected. The river, notwithstanding the failure of the monsoon, continued to rise. We passed, on the eastern side, Kiouptaun, or the Line of Rocks, Tanoundain, a respectable town, with several other towns and villages. In the evening we brought to at an island opposite Tirroup-mew, or Chinese City. There is a small district that bears the same name, called so in commemoration of a victory gained here over an army of Chinese that invaded the

Birman empire some centuries ago, at the period when Pagahm was the seat of government; whence it appears, that the Chinese have long considered this kingdom as a desirable conquest, and have made more than one fruitless attempt to accomplish its subjection.

The next day we stopped five miles above Tirroup-mew, where the Keenduem mingles its waters with those of the Irrawaddy. This great river comes from the north-west, and divides the country of Cassay from that of Ava. The Birmanians say, that it has its source in a lake three months journey to the northward. It is navigable, as far as the Birman territories extend, for vessels of burthen. An intelligent man belonging to Dr Buchanan's boat informed him that the most distant town in the possession of the Birmanians on the Keenduem, was named Nakioung, and the first Shaan town* was called Thangdat. The entrance of the Keenduem seemed somewhat less than a mile wide. The Irrawaddy, immediately above the junction, became much narrower; but I imagine a stream was concealed, and that what appeared to be the limits of the river was the bank of an island formed by another branch.

In the men who rowed the war-boats that accompanied the barge from Ummerapoora, I had remarked features differing much from the other

* Shaan, or Shan, is a very comprehensive term given to different nations, some independent, others the subjects of the greater states. Thus, the Birmanians frequently mention the Melap-Shaan, or Shaan subject to the Birmanians; the Yoodra-Shaan, subject to the Siamese; the Cassay-Shaan, to the Cassayers.

boatmen, and a softness of countenance that resembled more the Bengal than the Birman character of face. On inquiry, I learned that they were Cassayers, or the sons of Cassayers, who had been brought away from their native country, at times when the Birmans carried their predatory incursions across the Keenduem. Eastern invaders, who do not intend to occupy the territories they overrun, usually adopt the policy of conveying away the inhabitants, particularly children, whom they establish within their own dominions, and thus acquire additional strength by augmenting the number of their subjects. This has been a practice of Asiatic warfare from time immemorial. The last contest of the English with Hyder Ally depopulated the Carnatic. Children, until they attain a certain age, may be transplanted with safety, and will assimilate to any soil; but after arriving at the years of maturity, the most lenient treatment will hardly reconcile the human mind to coercive detention in a foreign country. The spot where a person has passed the tender years of life, the long remembered and impressive interval between infancy and manhood, be it where it may, is ever dear to him. I should willingly have conversed with the Cassay boat people respecting their nation, but my situation forbade me either to gratify my own curiosity, or sanction the inquiries of others.

At ten o'clock we reached the town of Yandaboo, remarkable for its manufactories of earthen ware; and in the course of the day we passed many towns and villages, on each side agreeably shaded by trees, particularly by the palmyra and the tamarind. Early in the evening we brought

to in a creek which leads up to a large town named Summei-kioum. After dinner Dr Buchanan and myself took a walk along the margin of the creek, which carried us to the town by a wide circuit. We found the houses, though numerous, mean, and very irregularly built. The grounds in the neighbourhood were embanked for the cultivation of rice. The soil appeared to be good, but the inhabitants expressed the utmost anxiety on the subject of rain. Not a drop had yet fallen here, although, in the common course of seasons, the monsoon should have commenced three weeks earlier. The poor people were carefully husbanding their rice straw for the support of their cattle, large herds of which were endeavouring to pick up a subsistence from the parched blades of grass, in fields that were covered with dust instead of verdure. The appearance of these animals bespoke excessive poverty, if not actual famine.

At Summei-kioum there is the greatest manufactory of saltpetre and gunpowder in the kingdom. Here also is prepared the gunpowder that is required for the royal magazines. It is the sole occupation of the inhabitants. Neither saltpetre nor gunpowder are suffered to be exported under any plea; nor can the smallest quantity be sold without a special license from some man in power.

Early in the morning we left the neighbourhood of gunpowder and saltpetre. Temples and villages lined the banks so thickly that it would be tedious to enumerate them. At nine o'clock we stopped at Gnameaghee, celebrated for producing the best tobacco in the Birman empire. Many brick kilns were on fire, preparing materials for building temples, of which there appeared to be already a suffi-

cient number. Pursuing our journey, we passed numerous islands. Some of them were cultivated, and had houses, inhabitants, and trees. Towards evening the wind suddenly rose to a storm. Mr Wood and myself reached Sandaht, or Elephant Village. Dr Buchanan's boat could not make head against wind and stream, and dropped an anchor. Perceiving his situation, I despatched one of the war-boats to his aid, when the united efforts of both crews soon brought him in safety to the fleet. Sandaht is a small town, which, together with the lands adjacent, is occupied entirely by the elephant-keepers belonging to the royal stables. The king is the sole proprietor of all the elephants in his dominions; and the privilege to ride on, or keep one of these animals, is an honour granted only to men of the very first rank and consequence. His Birman majesty is said to possess 6000. In India, female elephants are prized beyond males, on account of their being more tractable; but in Ava it is the reverse. Females are never used on state occasions, and seldom for ordinary riding, which causes the other sex to be of much higher value. It rarely happens however that either one or the other is to be purchased; the king's exclusive right, and the limited use that is made of them, prevent their becoming an article of common sale.

We set out at an early hour next morning. Meahmoo, on the western side, appeared from the water to be a large town, shaded by groves of palmyra trees. It is remarkable for a manufactory of coarse chequered cotton cloth, such as is worn by the lower class of people. Yapadain, a town on the eastern side, was distinguished by several temples,

and a handsome monastery. About twelve o'clock the Shawbunder, who, after the interview at Loong-hee, had returned to Ava, again met us. He had travelled with great expedition, having been at court, and made his report. The present visit was a spontaneous act of civility. He possessed a small jaghire, or personal estate, in the neighbourhood, where he had prepared some refreshments, of which he requested I would stop to partake. I complied with his desire, and accompanied him to a bower formed in a clump of bamboos on the bank of the river, and shaded from the sun by an artificial awning of grass. Here we found a profusion of fruits, milk, butter, and preserves, in dishes laid out on carpets. A company of dancing girls and musicians from a neighbouring village entertained us with their music and graces. I remained as short a time as was consistent with civility, and then pursued my voyage. We passed in our progress several populous villages pleasantly situated, and adorned with well enclosed gardens and orchards of plantain, guava, and other fruit-trees. At night we brought to at Kiouptaloun, where a large temple, surrounded by several small buildings, was the only object that merited particular attention.

Next day we got under way at the customary hour, and made but slow progress, the wind heading us so far that the square sails of the Birman boats could not keep full. Oars and poles were plied with vigour. The river, which, though it had not yet risen to its utmost periodical height, had overflowed its banks, filled all the water-courses, and inundated the low grounds adjacent to its bed. As the force of the current lay in the

middle of the stream, in order to avoid its influence we frequently navigated through fields, in which the tall grass and reeds appeared above the surface of the water, and the trees had their stems immersed beneath the flood. The swelling of the Irrawaddy is not influenced by the quantity of rain which falls in the valleys, but by the torrents that rush down from the mountains. Notwithstanding the drought in the champaign country had been greater this year than usual, the river was swollen to its regular height, which, I was informed, it rarely fell short of, or exceeded. Indeed, this part of the country is seldom refreshed by copious rains, but, like Egypt, depends on the overflowing of its river to fertilize the soil. The Irrawaddy, during the monsoon months, rises and subsides three or four times. As our distance from Ummerapoorra diminished, towns and villages on each side recurred at short intervals, that it was in vain to inquire the name of each distinct assemblage of houses. Each, however, had its name, and was for the most part inhabited by one particular class of people, professing some separate trade, or following some peculiar occupation. We were shown a tomb erected to the memory of a person of high distinction, who had been accidentally drowned near that place fifteen years before. It was an oblong brick building, one story high, with eight or nine doors opening towards the river. Many beautiful temples and kioums would have engaged our attention, had we not already seen such numbers, and been assured that all we had viewed fell far short of those which we should have an opportunity of beholding at the capital. We brought to late in the evening, at the lower landing place of what

was once the city of Ava, and the metropolis of all the Birman empire.

In the morning I took a hasty view of Aungwa, or Ava. It is divided into an upper and lower city, both of which are fortified. The lower, which is the most extensive, I judged to be about four miles in circumference. It is protected by a wall thirty feet high, at the foot of which there is a deep and broad fosse. The communication between the fort and the country is over a mound of earth crossing the ditch, that supports a causeway. An embankment of earth in the inside sustains the wall. The upper or smaller fort, which may be called the citadel, and does not exceed a mile in circuit, was much stronger, and more compact than the lower; but neither the upper nor the lower had a ditch on the side of the river. The walls are now mouldering into decay; ivy clings to the sides; and bushes, suffered to grow at the bottom, undermine the foundation, and have already caused large chasms in the different faces of the fort. The materials of the houses, consisting chiefly of wood, had, on the first order for removing, been transported to the new city of Ummerapoor. But the ground, unless where it is covered with bushes, or rank grass, still retains traces of former buildings and streets. The lines of the royal palace, of the Lotoo, or grand council hall, the apartments of the women, and the spot on which the piasath, imperial spire, had stood, were pointed out to us by our guide. Clumps of bamboos, a few plantain trees, and tall thorns, occupy the greater part of the area of this lately flourishing capital. We observed two dwelling-houses of brick and mortar, the roofs of which had fallen in. These, our guide

said, had belonged to Colars, or foreigners. On entering one, we found it inhabited only by bats, which flew in our faces, whilst our sense of smelling was offended by their filth, and by the noisome mildew that hung upon the walls. Numerous temples, on which the Birmans never lay sacrilegious hands, were dilapidating by time. It is impossible to draw a more striking picture of desolation and ruin.

Among the religious buildings within the fort, one named Shoegunga Praw, nowadays distinguished for size or splendour, was, in former times, held peculiarly sacred, and is still revered above the rest. At the present day, when an officer of rank is about to enter on a great public trust, or a new commander is appointed to the army, the oath of allegiance is administered in this temple with great solemnity—a breach of which is considered the most heinous crime that a Birman can be guilty of, and is invariably punished by the severest tortures. How Shoegunga obtained this distinction I was not able to learn. We were informed that a temple of much greater magnitude, named Logatherpoo Praw, stood a short distance to the westward of the fort, in which was a colossal figure of Gaudma, formed out of a solid block of marble. This temple and image we had a better opportunity of viewing on our return.

Leaving Ava in our rear, the river bends again to the northward, when the opposite city of Chagain, and the spires, the turrets, and the lofty Pisath of Ummerapoorra, create an unexpected pleasure, and exhibit a fine contrast to the gloomy and deserted walls of Ava. Chagain, on the north side, once too the seat of imperial residence, is

situated partly at the foot, and partly on the side, of a rugged hill that is broken into separate eminences, and on the summit of each stands a spiral temple. These temples, rising irregularly one above another to the top of the mountain, form a beautiful assemblage of objects, the effect of which is increased by their being carefully whitewashed and kept in repair. As we sailed near the opposite shore, the sun shone full upon the hill, and its reflected rays displayed the scenery to the highest advantage; in addition to this, the swollen state of the river gave to the waters the semblance of a vast lake, interspersed with islands, in which the foundations of Ummerapoora seemed to be immersed. Numberless boats were passing up and down, and the houses on the western, or rather southern shore, appeared, from their uninterrupted succession, to be a continued town, or the suburbs of a city.

At twelve o'clock we came to the mouth of the channel that communicates with the lake of Tounzemahn, through which it receives its waters from the river. The situation of Ummerapoora has already been described. The southern face of the fort is washed, during the rainy season, by the waves of the lake, and the houses of the city and suburbs extend along the bank as far as the extreme point of land. Across the lake, and opposite to the fort, stands the small village of Tounzemahn, near which, in a tall grove of mango, palmyra, and cocoa-nut trees, a dwelling was prepared for the British deputation. On entering the lake, the number of boats that were moored, as in a harbour, to avoid the influence of the sweep-

ing flood—the singularity of their construction—the height of the waters, which threaten inundation to the whole city—and the amphitheatre of lofty hills that nearly surrounded us, altogether presented a novel scene, exceedingly interesting to a stranger. We rowed towards the grove, whilst the greater part of the fleet went to the opposite side. On reaching the bank, I perceived a war-boat belonging to the Maywoon of Pegue, who, I understood, was at the grove waiting our arrival. I was received, on landing, by Baba-Sheen, and some inferior officers. They accompanied me to the house, which was situated about 300 yards from the brink of the lake, overshadowed by lofty trees, that completely defended it from the meridian sun. When we came to the entrance of the virando, or balcony, the Maywoon of Pegue, the governor of Bamoo, a province bordering on China, and the Woondock before mentioned, welcomed me to the capital. Being seated on carpets spread along the floor, the conversation turned on general topics, and particularly on European geography, a subject on which the governor of Bamoo appeared very desirous of information. After some time, the Woondock, addressing himself to me, said, that his Birman majesty had been absent a few months, at a country residence named Meengoung, where he was erecting a magnificent temple to their divinity Gaudma, but was expected to return soon to Ummerapoorra; that, in the mean time, instructions had been given to his ministers to provide every thing requisite for the accommodation of the English gentlemen, and that Baba-Sheen was commanded to reside near us, in order to supply our wants, and to communicate our wishes.

To this the Maywoon of Pegue added, that the two inferior Serees, or provincial under secretaries, who had accompanied us from Rangoon, were likewise directed to attend to our orders, and, being persons to whom we were accustomed, would probably be more agreeable to us than entire strangers.

These polite and hospitable attentions were received and acknowledged by me with real satisfaction; nor was it at all diminished by the freedom with which the Woondock informed me, that it was contrary to the etiquette of the Birman court, for a public minister from a foreign nation to go abroad before his first audience. He therefore hoped I would not cross the lake in person, or suffer any of my people to do so, until the ceremonials were past; but as our customs differed from theirs, and the Europeans habituated themselves to take exercise, I was at full liberty to walk or ride into the country, or over the plains that lay between our dwelling and the hills, as far as I thought proper; recommending to me, at the same time, not to go to any great distance, as it would be considered by the common people in the light of a derogation from my own consequence. I thanked him for his counsel, which was delivered with many expressions of civility, and readily acquiesced in what he assured me was an established custom.

This usage of debarring a public minister from entering the capital previous to his first formal presentation, I understood, was neither recent nor uncommon. It has long been the known practice of the Birman and Siamese governments. Monsieur

Loubere makes mention of it in his Account of an Embassy to Siam, sent from the court of Louis the Fourteenth. It is founded on that cautious policy which governs all nations eastward of India in their intercourse with foreign states.

CHAPTER II.

PLACE OF RESIDENCE DESCRIBED—DEPUTATION FROM CHINA PROVINCIAL—NOT IMPERIAL—RHOOM, A BUILDING SOMETIMES ATTACHED TO PRIVATE HOUSES—REASON OF IT—MUNIFICENCE OF THE BIRMAN GOVERNMENT—LETTER FROM GENERAL ERSKINE—OPENED BY THE BIRMAN MINISTER—APOLOGY—APPEARANCE OF THE ADJACENT COUNTRY—PARCHED FOR WANT OF RAIN—CASSAY FARMERS—WOMEN INDUSTRIOUS—ROW THE BOATS—FOND OF SINGING—CHINESE MUSIC DISCORDANT AND TROUBLESOME—INDOLENCE OF THE CHINESE—KING RETURNS TO THE CAPITAL—ECLIPSE OF THE MOON—REASON OF DELAY—PRIDE OF THE COURT—ITS FUNTILIOUSNESS—LETTER FROM THE GOVERNOR—GENERAL TRANSLATED—PRESENT A MEMORIAL—EMBASSIES USUALLY CONSIST OF THREE MEMBERS—VISIT FROM THE JUNIOR DEPUTIES FROM CHINA—WHIMSICAL CEREMONY—RETURN THE VISIT—SUBJECT OF CONVERSATION.

As soon as my visitors took their leave, I made a survey of our new habitation. It was a spacious

house of one story, raised from the ground somewhat more than two feet, and better covered than Birman houses usually are. It consisted of two good sized rooms, and a large virando, or balcony. The partitions and walls were made of cane mats, with latticed windows in the sides. The shape of the roof was such as distinguishes the houses of the nobles. It was altogether a comfortable habitation, and well adapted to the climate. Mr Wood had a smaller house erected behind mine, and parallel to it; and Dr Buchanan another at right angles. Small separate huts were constructed for the guard, and for our attendants. The whole was surrounded by a strong bamboo paling, which inclosed a court-yard. There were two entrances by gates, one in front of my house, the other backwards. At each of these, on the outside of the paling, was a shed, in which a Birman guard was posted, to protect us from thieves, keep off the populace, and, probably, to watch and report our movements.

On the skirts of the same grove, in a line with our dwelling, similar houses were erected for three Chinese deputies, who had arrived at Ummera-poorra about two months before us. These personages were represented as composing a royal mission from the imperial city of Peking; but circumstances early led me to suspect that their real character did not rise higher than that of a provincial deputation from Manchegee, or Yunan, the south-west province of China, which borders on the kingdom of Ava—a conjecture that was afterwards confirmed. They had accompanied the governor of Bamoo, which is the frontier province, to the capital; and I understood that their busi-

ness was to adjust some mercantile concerns relating to the jee, or mart, where the commodities of the two empires are brought and bartered. It was not at all improbable, that the mission had been sanctioned by the authority of the Emperor of China, especially as the principal member of it was a native of Peking, and had lately come from thence. But the false pride of the Birman court suggested the puerile * expedient of representing it to us as an imperial embassy; a distinction to which, I was privately informed from an authentic source, it possessed no pretensions whatever. The members, however, were treated apparently with much personal respect and attention.

The building denominated Rhoom has already been described as the official hall of justice, where the members of provincial governments, and all municipal officers, are accustomed to assemble for the transaction of public business. Every man of high rank in the Birman empire is a magistrate, and has a place of this description and name contiguous to his dwelling; but always on the outside of the enclosure of his court-yard, and not surrounded by any fence or railing, in order to manifest publicity, and show that it is the seat of majesty and justice, to which all mankind may have free access. An imperial mandate to a governor,

* The Chinese seem to have been actuated by a policy equally absurd, when they informed Sir George Staunton, at the time of the formal introduction of Lord Macartney, that 'Ambassadors from Pegue' were present; and that 'Siam, Ava, and Pegue were tributary to China.' Such unworthy deceptions not being expected, could hardly be guarded against. The courts of Ava and Peking appear to resemble each other in many points; but in none more than in their vanity, which often manifests itself in a manner not less ridiculous than contemptible.

or an order from a governor to a petty miougee, or chief of a small town or district, is invariably opened and read aloud in this sanctified hall. The Birman government, in the administration of public affairs, suffers no such thing as privacy or concealment. The rhoom is likewise an appendage of dignity, as it denotes him to whose habitation it is annexed to be a person of rank and consequence. A building of this sort was erected within a few yards of the front gate of our inclosure.

For two days after our landing, the boatmen and servants were employed in transporting our baggage from the boats to the house, and our time was chiefly taken up in arranging the domestic economy of our new residence, in which we found a liberal provision of all such necessaries as the natives themselves require. My rooms were carpeted, but the chairs, tables, &c. were my own. Rice, gee (clarified butter), firewood, and pots for dressing victuals, were supplied to our people in abundance. A few stalls, or petty shops, were established in the grove, to afford the smaller ingredients of cookery, such as greens, spices, salt, tamarinds, &c. Here also tobacco and beetle leaf were sold; and to enable our attendants to purchase such articles, one hundred tackal, about 12*l*. Sterling, were distributed amongst them. This was an act of munificence which I with great difficulty avoided the obligation of, in my own person; but no remonstrance could prevail on the Birman officer to dispense with it in the instance of our domestics.

The delinquent refugees, of whom mention has been made in a former part of this work, as having been surrendered, by order of the Governor-

general, to the justice of their country, had reached Ummerapoorra some weeks previous to our arrival. The Birman guard that escorted them had brought a letter directed to me from General Erskine, the English commander at Chittigong. This letter the Birman minister, as it was alleged, through mistake, but more probably by design, caused to be opened, and procured a translation from an Armenian interpreter. The circumstance was reported to the king, who ordered that the letter should be safely deposited in the Lotoo, and given to me on my arrival. The royal injunctions were punctually obeyed. An officer, in his dress of ceremony, brought it over. A proposal was first made, that I should go myself to the rhoom, solicit its restoration, receive it as an act of grace, and do homage to the king, by bowing with my face towards the palace. From this I entirely dissented, as the cause of complaint was with me, and confidence had in some measure been violated by their breaking the seal. I do not imagine that the proposition originated from any authority, as it was immediately given up, and the letter, in a silk wrapper, was formally presented to me on a tray, by the officer who conveyed it across the lake.

Being now comfortably lodged, we had leisure to take a view of the circumjacent country, and observe the objects that immediately surrounded us. Behind the grove in which we lived was a smooth extensive plain, intersected by the embankments, or what, in the past year, had been fields of rice, but which promised, this season, to be an unproductive waste, owing to the uncommon drought. Notwithstanding the spot we were on was elevated very little above the present level of the lake,

which had now nearly reached its utmost height, yet the ground was parched up, and divided into chasms from want of moisture. Dark and rugged mountains, about eight miles distant, bounded the prospect to the south-west. Several small villages were scattered over the plain, and on the skirts of the grove, inhabited, as we were informed, by native Cassayers, or the descendents of Cassayers, who had been carried into captivity by the Birman invaders during their predatory expeditions across the Keenduem.

The Seree who accompanied me said, that these people, whom he called Munniporeans, from Munnipore, the capital of Cassay, were in general become reconciled to their state of servitude, owing to their having been brought away very young from their own country. The superior industry and skill which they possess over the Birmans in different branches of handicraft, supplied them with a comfortable subsistence. Those in our neighbourhood were farmers and gardeners, who cultivated pulse, greens, onions, and such vegetables as Birmans use. These articles they transport at an early hour across the lake to the city, where they retail them in the market, and bring home the produce at night. This business is mostly performed by females. One man, commonly a person in years, accompanies each boat, in which, standing erect, he acts as steersman, whilst the women, usually from ten to fourteen in number, sitting with their legs across, row short oars, or use paddles, according to the size of the vessel. When they set out in a morning, they proceed in silence; but returning at night, they join in jocund chorus, and time the stroke of their oars to the bars of

their song. We were serenaded every evening from dusk till ten o'clock by successive parties of these joyous females, whose strains, though unpolished, were always melodious and pleasing. The Birmans, both men and women, are fond of singing whilst at work. It lightens their labour. "Song sweetens toil, how rude soe'er the sound." Unfortunately our music was not confined to these passing chantresses. There were other performers, less agreeable, nearer to us. Our neighbours, the deputies from China, unluckily for the repose of those from Britain, happened to be amateurs in their way, and had amongst their dependants a select band of musicians, such as I certainly had never heard equalled. It is impossible to describe the horrible noises that issued from gongs, drums, cymbals, an instrument with two strings, which may be called a fiddle, and something like a clarionet, that sent forth a sound more grating to the ear than all the rest. This was their constant nocturnal amusement, which never ended before midnight, and was not once remitted till the principal personage of the embassy became so indisposed that he could endure it no longer. Whilst he lingered, we enjoyed tranquillity; but after his decease the concert recommenced, and continued, to our great annoyance, till they quitted the grove to return to their native country.

The opposite habits of different nations were here strikingly evinced in the dissimilarity between the manners of the English, and those of the Chinese. The latter never left the precincts of their habitation, or manifested a desire to leave it, except to loll in easy chairs, and smoke their long pipes in the cool of the evening on the margin of the lake,

about two or three hundred yards in front of their house. The English gentlemen accustomed themselves either to walk or ride three or four miles in the morning before breakfast, and the same distance in the afternoon—a circumstance that did not escape the notice of the Birmans. My customary route was in a southern direction, over pathways that led through rice fields, in my return making a circuit along the green border of the lake. Although there was not the least cause to apprehend either injury or insolence, I was always attended in my excursions by six or eight soldiers, and by as many of my private servants, armed with sabres, who seemed to attract no less notice than myself. When I met any of the natives, particularly women, they squatted down in the posture of respect. As soon as the novelty of my appearance had a little worn off, I was told that they were still anxious to know why a person consulting his own amusement, and master of his own time, should walk so fast; but on being informed that I was “a Colar,” or stranger, and that it was the custom of my country, they were reconciled to this, as well as to every other act that did not coincide with their own prejudices and usage.

In a few days the return of the king was announced by the discharge of rockets, and by the general bustle that so important an event caused among all classes of people. We saw nothing of the display; which we understood, on this occasion, was not at all pompous.

The period of our arrival occurred at a juncture that supplied the Birman court with a plausible excuse for postponing the consideration of public business, and delaying my formal reception, as well

as the delivery of the letter from the Governor-general to the King. It so happened, that in the ensuing month there was to be an eclipse of the moon, an operation of nature which they ascribe to the interference of a malignant demon. On such an occasion, affairs of state, and all important matters of business, that will admit of procrastination, are put off to the following month. The astrologers were assembled to consult on the first fortunate day after the lapse of that inauspicious moon, when they discovered that the seventeenth of the month Touzelien, corresponding with the 30th of August, was the earliest that would occur; and that day was accordingly appointed for the public reception of the English embassy.

Caution and policy had, perhaps, as great a share with the Birmans as superstition, in thus retarding the ceremony of our introduction. It was to them a novel incident. They were desirous to penetrate thoroughly into the objects we had in view, before any part of the subject came into formal discussion. They might probably also wish to have an opportunity to judge of our national character, and to determine, from our conduct, in what manner to regulate their own. If such were their motives, they were consistent with that sagacity which I found invariably displayed by the Birman government, in all its resolutions and acts of a public nature.

But the prevailing characteristic of the Birman court is pride. Like the sovereign of China, his majesty of Ava acknowledges no equal. Indeed, it is the fixed principle of all nations eastward of Bengal, to consider foreign ministers as suppliants

come to solicit protection, not as representatives who may demand redress ; rather as vassals to render homage, than as persons vested with authority to treat on equal terms. Of this system I was early apprised, and felt no disappointment at hearing of a general rumour current among the higher ranks of Birmans, that a deputy had arrived from the English government, bearing tribute for their king. Reports of this nature were no otherwise regarded, than as an admonition to regulate my actions with scrupulous circumspection.

Amongst other regulations of this punctilious court, I was given to understand, that it was not customary for the king to receive any letter in a formal manner without being previously apprised of its contents. This created some difficulty in respect to the letter from the Governor-general, which was at length surmounted by an agreement on my part to admit of a copy being made in my presence ; but it was stipulated by them, that it should be transcribed in the rhoom adjacent to my house, and not in my private residence. In this proposal I acquiesced ; and accordingly a formal deputation, consisting of seven or eight officers of state, was directed to proceed to the rhoom, where they were to open the letter, and see it properly transcribed. These personages came with much parade, apparelled in their robes of ceremony. On landing, they walked directly to the rhoom, and, having taken their seats, sent a Terrezogee, or inferior officer, along with Baba-Sheen, to request I would come, and bring with me the Governor-general's letter. I obeyed this summons, accompanied by the other gentlemen, and our usual attendants. On entering the rhoom, I was civilly de-

sired, as the occasion was a solemn one, to make obeisance towards the piasath, or spire of the royal palace, which was more than two miles distant—a ceremony that I complied with by raising my right hand to my head, and making a slight inclination of my body, after the manner of the Mahomedan Salaam. Being seated, I delivered the letter, which was written in English and in Persian, to the Woondock, or superior officer. It was immediately opened by a secretary; and an Armenian interpreter, named Muckatees, who spoke and wrote English fluently, was ordered to make a copy in English, whilst a Mussulman moon-shee made another in Persian. When the writing was finished, I delivered a paper, which I desired might be laid before his Majesty's council, declaratory, in general terms, of the friendly wishes and views of the Governor-general in deputing me to the Birman court, and expressing my desire to maintain a confidential intercourse with such persons as his Majesty, or his council, should think proper to authorize.

The business being concluded, I returned to my house, and received a ceremonious visit from the Birman officers, among whom there were some personages of high distinction. A Woondock, but not the one that met me at Pagahm, presided. The master of the elephants, the old governor of Peen-keing, two Seredogees, or secretaries of state, and some other officers, whose names and stations I did not learn, were present. Their robes, which were very graceful, were made either of velvet or flowered satin, with wide bodies, and loose sleeves. They were all invested with the chain of nobility,

and wore caps covered with light green taffety. Three of higher rank than the rest, had a wreath of gold leaves encircling the bottom of their caps, not unlike the strawberry leaves in a ducal coronet. Their attendants, who were numerous, carried a variety of utensils, such as their beetle box, water flaggon, drinking cup, and spitting pot; of which latter, from their filthy practice of chewing beetle, they stood in constant need. I regaled them with tea, and English raspberry jam spread on biscuits. Although they praised, I do not think they much relished our preserve; they ate sparingly, and refreshed themselves with copious bowls of tea, unadulterated either by cream or sugar.

About this time the Chinese minister, who has already been mentioned as labouring under severe indisposition, sent me a polite message, expressing his regret that he had it not in his power to visit me in person; but that his two colleagues would wait on me whenever I should be at leisure to receive them. I returned my acknowledgments, and appointed the following day.

It is customary among nations eastward of Bengal, when a public deputation is sent to a foreign court, to nominate three members, who constitute a council. Although the president or chief of these is invested with all the power, and controls the proceedings of the rest, yet the distinction between them is not so wide as to preclude the juniors from a high degree of consequence being attached to their stations; and in case of the demise of the principal, the senior survivor executes all diplomatic functions, thus widely guarding against any

impediment which a casualty might throw in the way of negociation.

The two junior members of the Chinese deputation came at the appointed hour, accompanied by seven or eight attendants. There is no personage on earth so solemn and ceremonious as a Chinese officer of state. His dignity is preserved by profound silence, unless when occasion renders it necessary to exercise the faculty of speech, which is always slow, monotonous, and dull. Even gentlemen, in the familiarity of private life, seldom depart from their gravity, or relax into a smile. On entering a room where there is company, good breeding is evinced by a modest but pertinacious refusal to sit down till the master of the house is first seated, which would be an equal violation of decorum on his part. This custom, I was told, sometimes produces a very ludicrous scene, and the guests are not unfrequently obliged to be dragged to their chairs, and placed in them almost by compulsion. My house being about to undergo some alteration, I had caused a suite of tents, which I had brought with me, to be pitched for our temporary accommodation. In these I made arrangements to receive my visitors, who were exact to their time. On entering the door of the marquee, they both made an abrupt stop, and resisted all solicitation to advance to chairs, that had been prepared for them, until I should first be seated. In this dilemma Dr Buchanan, who had visited China, advised me what was to be done. I immediately seized on the foremost, whilst the Doctor himself grappled with the second. Thus we soon fixed them in their seats, both parties,

during the struggle, repeating Chin Chin, Chin Chin, the Chinese term of salutation. The conversation was not at all lively or interesting; for, though I sat between them, our words had to make a wide circuit before they reached each other's comprehension. I spoke in the language of Hindostan to a Mussulman who understood Birman, he delivered it to a Birman who spoke Chinese, this Birman gave it to the first official domestic, who repeated it to his master in the Chinese tongue. Our wines, port, claret, and madeira, all excellent of their kind, were served up. These, however, were too cold for Chinese palates. My visitants did not seem to relish them; but when cherry-brandy was introduced, their approbation was manifested by the satisfaction with which each of them swallowed a large glass full of the liquor. They tasted our tea, and, before they departed, politely presented me with some fans, two or three pieces of silk, two small boxes of tea, and three bottles of shouchou, a very fiery spirit distilled from rice, of which the Chinese are extremely fond. I returned the visit on the following day, and was received with as much pomp and ostentation as circumstances would admit. In front of the house a silk ensign waved, on which was embroidered the imperial dragon of China, and at their gate were suspended whips and chains, importing the power which the owner possessed to inflict corporal punishment. The two junior members met me at the threshold of their habitation, apologized for the unavoidable absence of the chief personage, and introduced me into a hall, the walls of which were concealed by screens of silk, and the chairs covered with loose pieces of satin. This interview was

rendered more interesting than the former, by a spontaneous question on the part of the senior Chinese, to know whether I heard of the safe arrival of Lord Macartney in England. His Lordship having left China only the preceding year, it was not possible to have had accounts of his reaching England, and the issue of his Lordship's negotiations was at that time wholly unknown. Consequently, being unacquainted both with the objects and event of that splendid mission, I felt myself rather on delicate ground in regard to the inquiries which I, on my part, wished to make. In order to draw some conclusion from their discourse, I encouraged them to pursue the topic, by asking how his Lordship's health had borne the vicissitudes of climate? They replied, that they only knew of the embassy from report, and seemed reluctant to enter into particulars, with which, it is probable, they were entirely unacquainted. I did not, therefore, press the subject farther; but I was not suffered to remain long in doubt what their sentiments were. Chinese vanity scarcely yields to that of the Birmans. Here was an opportunity, by exaggeration and misrepresentation, of indulging their own pride at the expense of the English nation, which, in the accounts circulated by them at Ummerapoorra respecting the embassy to China, they did not neglect. They treated us with tea and sweetmeats, and smoked their long pipes with unrelaxed solemnity. I repaid their civilities by giving them some broad cloth and brandy, and took my leave.

The alterations in my own dwelling, which I had suggested, were quickly carried into effect; and, by an order from the Lotoo, or grand coun-

cil, a small additional building, of a square form, and raised from the ground, was erected within the enclosure of our court, for the reception of the presents intended for his majesty. I was given to understand that this building was meant as a compliment to what they thought proper to term among themselves, "tribute from the King of England;" but as no such arrogant assumption was ever publicly professed, I could not take notice of mere rumour. It was, however, privately intimated to me, that keeping our tents pitched, would be considered by the court in the light of a reflection upon its hospitality; and an inference would be drawn from it, that we were discontented with our habitation. I immediately ordered the marquees to be struck, nothing being farther from my intention than to give umbrage, or express dissatisfaction, for which indeed, in the present instance, there was certainly no ground.

The interval thus elapsed between the time of our arrival at Ummerapoora, and of our formal introduction at court, afforded us leisure to acquire some insight into the customs, religious tenets, and moral economy of the Birman nation. Instead, therefore, of filling up the chasm by an unimportant journal, in which the acts of one day differed but little from those of the preceding, I shall dedicate a few pages to a more general account of the country, and endeavour, as far as our own circumscribed observation, and the information of others, enabled us, to illustrate the character of this people from their manners and their state of society, from the progress which the arts had made, and from the usages of the inhabitants in common life.

CHAPTER III.

RELIGION OF THE BIRMANS—THEIR LAWS—
 JURISDICTION OF THE METROPOLIS—LAWYERS
 —THE ROYAL ESTABLISHMENT—COUNCIL OF
 STATE—OFFICERS—HONOURS NOT HEREDI-
 TARY—INSIGNIA OF RANK—DRESS—RESEM-
 BLANCE TO THE CHINESE—MARRIAGES—FU-
 NERALS—POPULATION—REVENUE.

AFTER what has been written, there can be little necessity to inform my readers, that the Birman's are Hindoos : not votaries of Brahma, but sectaries of Boodh, which latter is admitted by Hindoos of all descriptions to be the ninth Atavar, * or descent of the Deity in his capacity of preserver. He reformed the doctrines contained in the Vedas; and severely censured the sacrifice of cattle, or depriving any being of life. He is called the author of happiness. His place of residence was discovered at Gaya in Bengal, by the illustrious Amara, † renowned amongst men, “ who caused an image of the supreme Boodh to be made, and

* Sir William Jones on the Gods of Greece Italy, and India.

† See the translation of a Shanscrit inscription on a stone found in the temple of Boodh, at Gaya, by Mr Wilkins. Asiat. Research. Vol. I.

he worshipped it. Reverence be unto thee in the form of Boodh; reverence be unto thee, Lord of the earth; reverence be unto thee, an Incarnation of the Deity; and, Eternal One, reverence be unto thee, O God, in the form of Mercy."

Gotma, or Goutum, according to the Hindoos of India, or Gaudma, among the inhabitants of the more eastern parts, is said * to have been a philosopher, and is by the Birmans believed to have flourished about 2300 † years ago. He taught, in the Indian schools, the heterodox religion and philosophy of Boodh. The image that represents Boodh is called Gaudma, or Goutum, which is now a commonly received appellation of Boodh himself. This image is the primary object of worship in all countries situated between Bengal and China. The sectaries of Boodh contend with those of Brahma for the honour of antiquity, and are certainly far more numerous. The Cingaleze in Ceylon are Boodhists of the purest source, and the Birmans acknowledge to have originally received their religion from that island. ‡ It was brought, say the Rhahaans, first from Zehoo (Ceylon) to Arracan, and thence was introduced into Ava, and probably into China; for the Birmans assert with confidence that the Chinese are Boodhists.

This is a curious subject of investigation, and the concurrent testimony of circumstances, added to the opinions of the most intelligent writers, seem to leave little doubt of the fact. It cannot, how-

* Sir William Jones on the Gods of Greece, Italy and India.

† This agrees with the account of the Siamese computation given by Kæmpfer.

‡ The Birmans call Ceylon Zehoo.

ever, be demonstrated beyond the possibility of dispute, till we shall have acquired a more perfect knowledge of Chinese letters, and a readier access to their repositories of learning. Little can at present be added to the lights cast on the subject by the late Sir William Jones, in his Discourse delivered to the Asiatic Society on the Chinese. That great man has expressed his conviction in positive terms, that “Boodh was unquestionably the Foe of China,” and that he was also the god of Japan, and the Woden of the Goths—an opinion which corresponds with, and is perhaps grafted on, the information of the learned and laborious Kæmpfer, * corroborated afterwards by his own researches. On whatever grounds the latter inference rests, it will not tend to weaken the belief of his first position, when I observe that the Chinese deputies, on the occasion of our introduction to the Seredaw or high priest of the Birman empire, prostrated themselves before him, and afterwards adored an image of Gaudma with more religious fervour than mere politeness, or acquiescence in the customs of another nation, would have excited. The Bonzes also of China, like the Rhahaans of Ava, wear yellow as the sacerdotal colour, and in many of their customs and ceremonies there may be traced a striking similitude.

* Speaking of the Budz, or Seaka, of the Japanese, Kæmpfer says, ‘I have strong reasons to believe, both from the affinity of the name, and the very nature of this religion, that its author and founder is the very same person whom the Bramins call Rudha, and believe to be the essential spirit of Wishna, or their deity, who made his ninth appearance in the world under this name. The Peguers call him Samana Khutaman.’ Hist. Japan. Book IV. ch. 6. Treating

Whatever may be the antiquity of the worship of Boodh, the wide extent of its reception cannot be doubted. The most authentic writer * on the eastern peninsula calls the image of Gaudma, as worshipped by the Siamese, Somona-codom. Being unacquainted with the language of Siam, which, from so short a residence as four months, it was impossible he could have acquired, he confounds two distinct words, Somona, and Codom, signifying Codom, or Gaudma, in his incarnate state. The difference between the letters C and G may easily have arisen from the mode of pronunciation in different countries. Even in the Birman manner of uttering the word, the distinction between these letters is not very clear. The Boodh of the Indians and the Birmans is pronounced, by the Siamese, Pooth, or Pood ; by the vulgar, Poo ; which, without any violence to probability, might be converted by the Chinese into Foe. * The Tamulic termination *en*, as Mr Chambers remarks, creates a striking resemblance between Pooden and the Woden of the Goths. Every person who has conversed with the natives of India, knows that Boodh is the Dies Mercurii, the Wednesday, or Woden's day, of all Hindoos.

Treating on the introduction of Boodh into China, the same author says, ' About the year of Christ 518, one Darma, a great saint, and twenty-third successor on the holy see of Seaka (Budha), came over into China from Seitenseku, as the Japanese writers explain it, that is, from that part of the world which lies westward with regard to Japan, and laid, properly speaking, the first firm foundation of the Budsdoism in that mighty empire.' Book IV. ch. 6.

* Loubere.

† M. Gentil asserts, that the Chinese admit, by their own accounts, that Foe, their object of worship, was originally brought from India.

Chronology, however, which must always be accepted as a surer guide to truth, than inferences drawn from the resemblance of words, and etymological reasoning, does not, to my mind, sufficiently establish that Boodh and Woden were the same. The period of the ninth incarnation of Vishnu was long antecedent to the existence of the deified hero of Scandinavia. Sir William Jones determines the period when Boodh appeared on the earth to be 1014 years before the birth of Christ. Odin, or Woden, flourished at a period not very distant from our Saviour, and was, according to some, a cotemporary of Pompey and of Julius Cæsar. The author of the Northern Antiquities places him 70 years after the Christian era. Even the Birman Gaudma, conformably to their account, must have lived above 500 years before Woden. So immense a space can hardly be supposed to have been overlooked; but if the supposition refers, not to the warrior of the North, but to the original deity Odin, the attributes of the latter are as widely opposed to those of Boodh, who was himself only an incarnation of Vishnu, as the dates are incongruous. The deity, whose doctrines were introduced into Scandinavia, was a god of terror, and his votaries carried desolation and the sword throughout whole regions; but the Ninth Avatar* brought the peaceful olive, and came into the world for the sole purpose of preventing sanguinary acts. These apparent inconsistencies will naturally lead us to hesitate in acknowledging Boodh

* See the account of the Ninth Avatar, by the Rev. Mr Maurice, in his History of Hindostan, Vol. II. Part 3.

and Woden to be the same person. Their doctrines are opposite, and their eras are widely remote.

Had that distinguished genius, * whose learning so lately illumined the East, been longer spared for the instruction and delight of mankind, he would probably have elucidated this obscurity, and have removed the dusky veil that still hangs over the religious legends of antiquity. The subject, † as it now stands, affords an ample field for indulging in pleasing theories, and fanciful speculations; and as the probability increases of being able to trace all forms of divine worship to one sacred and primeval source, the inquiry, in proportion, becomes more interesting, and awakens a train of serious ideas in a reflecting mind.

It would be as unsatisfactory as tedious, to attempt leading my reader through the mazes of mythological fable, and extravagant allegory, in which the Hindoo religion, both Braminical and Boodhic, is enveloped and obscured. It may be sufficient to observe, that the Birmans believe in the Metempsychosis, and that, after having undergone a certain number of transmigrations, their souls will at last either be received into their Olympus on the mountain Meru, ‡ or be sent to

* I need hardly observe, that I mean Sir William Jones.

† General Vallancey, so justly celebrated for his knowledge of the antiquities of his country, has expressed his perfect conviction that the Hindoos have been in Britain and in Ireland. See Major Ouseley's Oriental Collections, Vol. II. Much attention is certainly due to such respectable authority.

‡ Meru properly denotes the pole, and, according to the learned Captain Wilford, it is the celestial north pole of

suffer torments in a place of divine punishments. Mercy they hold to be the first attribute of the divinity : “ Reverence be to thee, O God, in the form of Mercy ! ” and they worship God by extending mercy unto all his creatures.

The laws of the Birmans, like their religion, are Hindoo ; in fact, there is no separating their laws from their religion. Divine authority revealed to Menu the sacred principles in a hundred thousand slokas, or verses. Menu promulgated the code. Numerous commentaries * on Menu were composed by the Munis, or old philosophers, whose treatises constitute the Dherma Sastra, or body of law.

The Birmans generally call their code Derma Sath, or Sastra ; it is one among the many commentaries on Menu. I was so fortunate as to procure a translation of the most remarkable passages, which were rendered into Latin by Padre Vincentius Sangermano, and, to my great surprise, I found it to correspond closely with a Persian version of the Arracan code, which is now in my possession. From the inquiries to which this circumstance gave rise, I learned that the laws, as well as the religion of the Birmans, had found their way into the Ava country from Arracan, and came originally from Ceylon. † The Birman sys-

the Hindoos, round which they place the garden of Indra, and describe it as the seat of delights.

* The code of Gentoo laws, translated by Mr Halhed, I am informed, is a compilation from the different commentaries on Menu, who was “ the grandson of Bramah, the first of created beings,” and whose work, as translated by Sir William Jones, is the ground of all Hindoo jurisprudence.

† As an incontestable proof that the Birmans acknow-

tem of jurisprudence is replete with sound morality, and, in my opinion, is distinguished above any other Hindoo commentary for perspicuity and good sense. It provides specifically for almost every species of crime that can be committed, and adds a copious chapter of precedents and decisions, to guide the inexperienced, in cases where there is doubt and difficulty. Trial by ordeal and imprecation are the only absurd passages in the book; but on the subject of women it is, to an European, offensively indecent. Like the immortal Menu, it tells the prince and the magistrate their duty, in language austere, manly, and energetic; and the exhortation at the close is at once noble and pious. The following extracts will serve as a specimen:

‘ A country may be said to resemble milk, in
 ‘ which oppression is like to water. When wa-
 ‘ ter is mingled with milk, its sweetness imme-
 ‘ diately vanishes. In the same manner, oppres-
 ‘ sion destroys a fair and flourishing country. The
 ‘ royal Surkaab * will only inhabit the clearest
 ‘ stream; so a prince can never prosper in a dis-
 ‘ tracted empire. By drinking pure milk, the
 ‘ body is strengthened, and the palate is gratified;
 ‘ but when mingled with water, pleasure no longer

ledge the superior antiquity of the Cingalese, and the reception of their religion and laws from that quarter, the King of Ava has sent, within these few years, at separate times, two messengers, persons of learning and respectability, to Ceylon, to procure the original books on which their tenets are founded; and, in one instance, the Birman minister made an official application to the Governor-general of India, to protect and assist the person charged with the commission.

* Bittern. Surkaab is a Persian term, used by the Mahomedan translator.

‘ is found, and the springs of health gradually decline.

‘ A wise prince resembles a sharp sword, which at a single stroke cuts through a pillar with such keenness that the fabric still remains unshaken. With equal keenness, his discernment will penetrate advice.

‘ A wise prince is dear to his people, as the physician is to the sick man ; as light to those that are in darkness ; as unexpected sight to the eyes of the blind ; as is the full moon on a wintry night, and milk to the infant from the breast of its mother.’

The commentator then proceeds to denounce tremendous judgments against an oppressive prince and a corrupt judge. The latter is thus curiously menaced :

‘ The punishment of his crimes, who judges iniquitously, and decides falsely, shall be greater than though he had slain one thousand women, one hundred priests, or one thousand horses.’

The book concludes as follows :

‘ Thus have the learned spoken, and thus have the wise decreed, that litigation may cease among men, and contention be banished the land ; and let all magistrates and judges expound the laws as they are herein written ; and to the extent of their understanding, and according to the dictates of their conscience, pronounce judgment agreeably to the tenor of this book. Let the welfare of their country, and the benefit of their fellow-creatures, be their continual study, and the sole object of their attention. Let them ever be mindful of the supreme dignity of the

‘ Roulah * and the Bramins, and pay them that
‘ reverence which is due to their sacred charac-
‘ ters. Let them observe becoming respect to-
‘ wards all men, and they shall shield the weak
‘ from oppression; support the helpless, and, in
‘ particular cases, mitigate the severity of aveng-
‘ ing justice.

‘ It shall be the duty of a prince, and the ma-
‘ gistrates of a prince, wisely to regulate the inter-
‘ nal policy of the empire, to assist and befriend
‘ the peasants, merchants, farmers, and those who
‘ follow trades, that they may daily increase in
‘ worldly wealth and happiness; they shall pro-
‘ mote all works of charity, encourage the opu-
‘ lent to relieve the poor, and liberally contribute
‘ to pious and laudable purposes; and whatsoever
‘ good works shall be promoted by their influence
‘ and example, whatsoever shall be given in cha-
‘ rity, and whatsoever benefit shall accrue to man-
‘ kind from their endeavours, it shall all be pre-
‘ served in the records of heaven, one-sixth part
‘ of which, though the deeds be the deeds of o-
‘ thers, yet shall it be ascribed unto them; and at
‘ the last day, at the solemn and awful hour of
‘ judgment, the recording spirit shall produce
‘ them, inscribed on the adamantine tablet of hu-
‘ man actions. But, on the other hand, if the
‘ prosperity of the nation be neglected, if justice
‘ be suffered to lie dormant, if tumults arise and
‘ robberies are committed, if rapine and foul as-
‘ sassination stalk along the plains, all crimes that
‘ shall be thus perpetrated through their remiss-
‘ ness, one-sixth part shall be brought to their ac-

* The Arracan name for Rhakaan.

‘ count, and fall with weighty vengeance on their
‘ heads; the dreadful consequences of which sur-
‘ pass the power of tongue to utter, or of pen to
‘ express.

Laws, thus dictated by religion, are, I believe, in general, conscientiously administered. The criminal jurisprudence of the Birmans is lenient in particular cases, but rigorous in others. Whoever is found guilty of an undue assumption of power, or of any crime that indicates a treasonable intent, is punished by the severest tortures. The first commission of theft does not incur the penalty of death, unless the amount stolen be above 800 kiat, or tackal, about 100*l.*, or attended with circumstances of atrocity, such as murder or mutilation. In the former case, the culprit has a round mark imprinted on each cheek by gunpowder and punctuation, and on his breast the word Thief, with the article stolen; for the second offence he is deprived of an arm; but the third inevitably produces capital punishment. Decapitation is the mode by which criminals suffer, in the performance of which the Birman executioners are exceedingly skilful.

The city of Ummerapoora is divided into four distinct subordinate jurisdictions, in each of which a Maywoon presides. This officer, who in the provinces is a viceroy, in the metropolis resembles a mayor, and holds a civil and criminal court of justice. In capital cases he transmits the evidence in writing, with his opinion, to the Lotoo, or grand chamber of consultation, where the council of state assembles. The council, after close examination into the documents, reports upon them to the king, who either pardons the offender, or orders execution of the sentence. The Maywoon is ob-

liged to attend in person, and see the punishment carried into effect.

Civil suits may be transferred from the courts of the Maywoons to the Lotoo. This removal, however, is attended with a heavy expense. There are regular established lawyers, who conduct causes, and plead. Eight only are licensed to plead in the Lotoo. They are called Ameendozaan. The usual fee is five tackal, equal to sixteen shillings; but the government has large profits on all suits that are brought into court.

There is no country of the East in which the royal establishment is arranged with more minute attention than in the Birman court. It is splendid without being wasteful, and numerous without confusion. The most distinguished members, when I was at the capital, were, the Sovereign, his principal Queen, entitled Nandoh Praw, by whom he has not any sons; his second wife, Myack Nandoh, by whom he has two sons; the Engy Teekien,* or Prince Royal, and Pêe Teekien, or Prince of Prome. The princes of Tongho, Bassien, and Pagahm, are by favourite concubines. Meedah Praw is a princess of high dignity, and mother of the chief queen. The prince royal is married, and has a son and two daughters, all young. The son takes precedence of his uncles, the crown descending to the male heirs in a direct line. These were the principal personages of the Birman royal family.

Next in rank to the princes of the blood royal, are the Woongees,† or chief ministers of state.

* Often called Engy Praw.

† Woon signifies Burden; the compound word implies, Bearer of the Great Burden.

The established number is four, but the place of one has long been vacant. These form the great ruling council of the nation; they sit in the Lotoo, or imperial hall of consultation, every day, except on the Birman sabbath, from twelve till three or four o'clock, or later, as there happens to be business. They issue mandates to the Maywoons, or viceroys of the different provinces; they control every department of the state, and, in fact, govern the empire, subject always to the pleasure of the king, whose will is absolute, and power undefined.

To assist in the administration of affairs, four officers, called Woondocks, are associated with the Woongees, but of far inferior authority. They sit in the Lotoo in a deliberative capacity, having no vote. They give their opinions, and may record their dissent from any measure that is proposed; but the Woongees decide. The Woondocks, however, are frequently employed to carry into execution business of great public importance.

Four Attawoons, or ministers of the interior, possess a great degree of influence that sometimes counteracts with success the views and wishes of the Woongees. These the king selects to be his privy counsellors, from their talents, and the opinion he entertains of their integrity. They have access to him at all times—a privilege which the principal Woongee does not enjoy.

There are four chief secretaries, called Sere-dogees, who have numerous writers or inferior Se-rees under them.

Four Nachaangee sit in the Lotoo, take notes, and report whatever is transacted.

Four Sandohgaan regulate all ceremonials, introduce strangers of rank into the royal presence,

and are the bearers of messages from the council of state to the king.

There are nine Sandozains, or readers, whose business it is to read all official writings, petitions, &c. Every document, in which the public is concerned, or that is brought before the council in the Lotoo, is read aloud.

The four Maywoons already mentioned are restricted to the magisterial superintendence of their respective quarters of the city. They have nothing farther to do with the Lotoo, than to obey the commands they receive from thence.

The Assaywoon, or paymaster-general, is also an officer of high importance. The place is at present held by one of the Woongees, who is called Assay Woongee.

There are several other officers of distinction, who bear no ostensible share in the administration of public affairs, such as the Daywoon, or king's armour-bearer; the Chaingeewoon, or master of the elephants; also the Woons of the queen's household, and that of the prince royal. Each of the junior princes has a distinct establishment.

In the Birman government there are no hereditary dignities or employments; all honours and offices, on the demise of the possessor, revert to the crown.

The tsaloe, or chain, is the badge of the order of nobility, of which there are different degrees, distinguished by the number of strings or small chains that compose the ornament. These strings are fastened by bosses where they unite. Three of open chain-work is the lowest rank. Three of neatly twisted wire is the next; then of six, of nine, and of twelve. No subject is ever honoured

with a higher degree than twelve ; the king alone wears twenty-four.

It has already been noticed, that almost every article of use, as well as ornament, particularly in their dress, indicates the rank of the owner. The shape of the beetle-box, which is carried by an attendant after a Birman of distinction wherever he goes, his ear-rings, cap of ceremony, horse furniture, even the metal of which his spitting-pot and drinking-cup are made, (which, if of gold, denote him to be a man of high consideration), all are indicative of the gradations of society ; and wo be unto him that assumes the insignia of a degree which is not his legitimate right !

The court dress of the Birman nobility is very becoming. It consists of a long robe, either of flowered satin or velvet, reaching to the ankles, with an open collar and loose sleeves. Over this there is a scarf, or flowing mantle, that hangs from the shoulders ; and on their heads they wear high caps made of velvet, either plain, or of silk embroidered with flowers of gold, according to the rank of the wearer. Ear-rings are a part of male dress. Persons of condition use tubes of gold about three inches long, and as thick as a large quill, which expands at one end like the mouth of a speaking trumpet. Others wear a heavy mass of gold beaten into a plate, and rolled up. This lump of metal forms a large orifice in the lobe of the ear, and drags it down by the weight to the extent sometimes of two inches. The women likewise have their distinguishing paraphernalia. Their hair is tied in a bunch at the top of the head, and bound round with a fillet, the embroidery and ornaments of which express their respective ranks. A short

shift reaches to the pit of the stomach, is drawn tight by strings, and supports the breasts. Over that is a loose jacket with close sleeves. Round their waist they roll a long piece of silk, or cloth, which, reaching to their feet, and sometimes trailing on the ground, encircles them twice, and is then tucked in. When women of condition go abroad, they put on a silk sash, resembling a long shawl, which crosses their bosom, and is thrown over the shoulders, gracefully flowing on each side. The lowest class of females often wear only a single garment, in the form of a sheet, which, wrapped round the body, and tucked in under the arm, crosses their breasts, which it scarcely conceals, and descends to their ankles. Thus, when they walk, the bottom of the cloth, where it overlaps, is necessarily opened by the protrusion of the leg, and displays to a side view as high as the middle of the thigh. Such an exposure, in the opinion of an European, bears an indecent appearance, although it excites no such idea in the people themselves. There is an idle and disgusting story related by some writers, respecting the origin of this fashion, which, being wholly unfounded, does not deserve repetition. It has been the established national mode of dress from time immemorial. And every woman, when walking, must show great part of her leg, as what may be called their petticoat is always open in front, instead of being closed by a seam.

Women, in full dress, stain the palms of their hands and their nails of a red colour, for which they use a vegetable juice, and strew on their bosoms powder of sandal wood, or of a bark called Sunneka, with which some rub their faces. Both

men and women tinge the edges of their eyelids and their teeth with black. This latter operation gives to their mouths a very unseemly appearance in the eyes of an European, which is not diminished by their being constantly filled with beetle leaf. Men of rank wear, in common dress, a tight coat, with long sleeves made of muslin, or of extremely fine nankeen, which is manufactured in the country; also a silk wrapper that encircles the waist. The working class are usually naked to the middle; but in the cold season, a mantle or vest of European broad cloth is highly prized.

The Birmans, in their features, bear a nearer resemblance to the Chinese than to the natives of Hindostan. The women, especially in the northern part of the empire, are fairer than Hindoo females, but not so delicately formed; they are, however, well made, and in general inclined to corpulence. Their hair is black, coarse, and long. The men are not tall in stature, but active and athletic. They have a very youthful appearance, from the custom of plucking their beards instead of using the razor. They tattoo their thighs and arms into various fantastic shapes and figures, which they believe operate as a charm against the weapons of their enemies. Neither the men nor the women are so cleanly in their persons as the Hindoos of India, among whom diurnal ablution is a religious as well as a moral duty. Girls are taught, at an early age, to turn their arms in such a manner as to make them appear distorted. When the arm is extended the elbow is inverted, the inside of the joint being protruded, and the external part bending inwards.

Marriages among the Birmans are not contracted until the parties attain the age of puberty. The contract is purely civil, the ecclesiastical jurisdiction having nothing to do with it. The law prohibits polygamy, and recognises but one wife, who is denominated Mica; concubinage, however, is admitted to an unlimited extent. A man may repudiate his wife under particular circumstances, but the process is attended with a heavy expense. Concubines, living in the same house with the legitimate wife, are, by law, obliged to perform menial services for her; and, when she goes abroad, they attend her, bearing her water-flaggon, beetle-box, fan, &c. When a husband dies, his concubines, if bound in servitude to him, become the property of the surviving widow, unless he shall have emancipated them by a specific act previous to his decease. When a young man is desirous to espouse a girl, his mother, or nearest female relation, first makes the proposal in private. If the suit be well received, a party of his friends proceed to the house of the parents of the maiden, with whom they adjust the dotal portion. On the morning of the bridal day the bridegroom sends to the lady three loongees, or lower garments, three tubbecks, or sashes, and three pieces of white muslin; such jewels, also ear-rings and bracelets, as his circumstances will admit. A feast is prepared by the parents of the bride, and formal writings are executed. The new-married couple eat out of the same dish; the bridegroom presents the bride with some læpack, or pickled tea, which she accepts, and returns the compliment. Thus ends the ceremony, without any of that subse-

quent riot* and resistance on the part of the young lady and her female friends, with which the Sumatran damsels oppose the privileges of an ardent bridegroom.

When a man dies intestate, three-fourths of his property go to his children born in wedlock, but not in equal proportions; and one-fourth to the widow, who is the guardian both of the property and the children, until the latter attain the age of maturity. A Birman funeral is solemnized with much religious parade, and external demonstration of grief. The corpse is carried on a bier, on men's shoulders; the procession moves slowly; the relations attend in mourning; and women, hired for the occasion, precede the body, and chant a dirge-like air. The Birmans burn their dead, unless the deceased is a pauper—in which case he is either buried, or cast into the river, as the ceremony of burning is very expensive. The bier is placed on a funeral pile six or eight feet high, made of billets of dried wood laid across, with intervals to admit a circulation of air, and increase the flame. The Rhahaans walk round the pile, reciting prayers to Gaudma, until the fire reaches the body, when the whole is quickly reduced to ashes. The bones are afterwards gathered and deposited in a grave. Persons of high distinction, such as the Seredaw, or chief ecclesiastic of a province, a Maywoon, a Woongee, or a member of the royal family, are embalmed, and their remains preserved six weeks or two months after decease, before they are committed to the funeral pile. During this period the body is laid in state in some kioum or

* See Marsden's Account of Sumatra, page 230.

religious building ; but at the capital it is placed in a sacred saloon, beautifully ornamented with gilding, and exclusively appropriated to that pious purpose. I was told that honey is the principal ingredient made use of to preserve the body from putrefaction.

Of the population of the Birman dominions I could only form a conclusion from the information I received of the number of cities, towns, and villages in the empire. These, I was assured by a person who might be supposed to know, and had no motive for deceiving me, amount to eight thousand, not including the recent addition of Arracan. If this be true, which I have no reason to doubt, and we suppose each town, on an average, to contain three hundred houses, and each house six persons, the result will determine the population at fourteen millions four hundred thousand. Few of the inhabitants live in solitary habitations ; they mostly form themselves into small societies ; and their dwellings, thus collected, compose their Ruas, or villages : if, therefore, we reckon their numbers, including Arracan, at seventeen millions, the calculation may not be widely erroneous—I believe it rather falls short of, than exceeds the truth. After all, however, it is mere conjecture, as I have no better data for my guidance than what I have related.

With regard to the revenue of the Birman state, I confess myself to be without the means of forming even a rough estimate of the amount. According to the sacred law, in the chapter which treats of the duties of a monarch, Dhasamedā,*

* See Appendix.

or a tenth of all produce, is the proportion which is to be exacted as the authorized due of the government; and one tenth is the amount of the king's duty on all foreign goods imported into his dominions. The revenue arising from the customs on imports, and from internal produce, is mostly taken in kind; a small part of which is converted into cash, the rest is distributed, as received, in lieu of salaries, to the various dependants of the court. Princes of the blood, high officers of state, and provincial governors, receive grants of provinces, cities, villages, and farms, to support their dignity, and as a remuneration of their services. The rents of these assignments they collect for their own benefit. Money, except on pressing emergency, is never disbursed from the royal coffers. To one man the fees of an office are allotted; to another a station where certain imposts are collected; a third has land; each in proportion to the importance of his respective employment. By these donations, they are not only bound in their own personal servitude, but likewise in that of all their dependants; they are called slaves of the king, and in turn their vassals are denominated slaves to them. The condition of these grants include also services of war, as well as the duties of office. Thus the Birman government exhibits almost a faithful picture of Europe in the darker ages, when, on the decline of the Roman empire, the principles of feudal dependence were established by barbarians from the north.

Although it seems difficult, and perhaps impossible, under such a system, to ascertain, in any standard currency, the amount of the royal reve-

nue, yet the riches which the Birman monarch is said to possess are immense—a supposition that may readily be admitted, when it is considered that a very small share of what enters his exchequer returns into circulation. The hoarding of money is a favourite maxim of Oriental state policy. An Eastern potentate cannot be brought to comprehend that the diffusion of property among his subjects is a surer source of wealth to himself, and of security to his throne, than the possession of Lydian treasures, locked up in vaults, and concealed in secret recesses, contrived by sordid avarice and foolish cunning.

CHAPTER IV.

MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT—INFANTRY—CAS-
SAY CAVALRY—ARTIFICERS—WAR-BOATS—
GUNPOWDER LONG KNOWN—WEAPONS—FOOD
—CLIMATE—SOIL—PRODUCE—MINERALS—
PRECIOUS STONES—COMMERCE—CURRENCY
—WEIGHTS—MEASURES—CHARACTER OF
THE NATIVES—NOT JEALOUS OF THEIR WO-
MEN—FEROCIOUS IN WAR—BEGGARS UN-
KNOWN—ANIMALS—DIVISION OF TIME—MU-
SIC—LANGUAGE—EXTENT OF THE EMPIRE—
RIVERS.

THE Birmans may be termed a nation of soldiers, every man in the kingdom being liable to be called upon for his military services; and war is deemed the most honourable occupation. The regular military establishment of the Birmans is, nevertheless, very inconsiderable; not exceeding the numbers of which the royal guard is composed, and such as are necessary to preserve the police of the capital. When an army is to be raised, a mandate issues from the golden palace, to all viceroys of provinces, and miougees of districts, requiring a certain number of men to be at a general rendezvous on an appointed day, under command sometimes of the viceroy himself, but oftener that of

an inferior officer. The levy is proportioned to the population of the province, or district, estimated from the number of registered houses that it contains. The provincial court determines the burden which each house is to bear; commonly every two, three, or four houses, are to furnish among them one recruit, or to pay 300 tackal in money, about 40*l.* or 45*l.* This recruit is supplied with arms, ammunition, and, I believe, with a certain daily allowance of grain from government, but is not entitled to pay. The families of these conscripts are carefully retained in the district which they inhabit, as hostages for the good conduct of their relation. In case of desertion or treachery, the innocent wife, children, and parents of the guilty person, are dragged to execution without the least remorse or pity. Even cowardice subjects the family of the delinquent to capital punishment. This barbarous law, which is rigorously enforced, must have a powerful effect in securing the allegiance of the troops, and of impelling them to vigorous exertion; and it is, perhaps, the only sure mode of inciting to enterprises of danger, men who are not actuated by any innate sense of honour, and who do not feel any national pride.

Infantry and cavalry compose the regular guards of the king. The former are armed with muskets and sabres; the latter are provided with a spear about seven or eight feet long, which they manage on horseback with great dexterity, seldom requiring or making use of any other weapon. The infantry are not uniformly clothed. I heard various accounts of their numbers; 700 do constant duty within the precincts, and at the several gates of the palace. I think that, on the day of my public

reception, I saw about 2000, and have no doubt that all the troops in the city were paraded on that occasion. I was told that there were only 300 cavalry in Ummerapoora, but that 2000 were scattered, in small detachments, throughout the neighbouring districts. All the troopers in the king's service are natives of Cassay, who are much better horsemen than the Birmans. Mr Wood, who saw some of them at exercise, informed me, that they nearly resembled those whom he had met with in Assam. They ride like all Orientals, with short stirrups and a loose rein. Their saddle is hard and high, and two large circular flaps of strong leather hang down on each side, painted or gilded, according to the quality of the rider. Their dress is not unbecoming. They wear a tight coat, with skirts reaching down to the middle of the thigh; and on their head a turban of cloth, rolled hard and plaited, which forms a high cone, that bends backward in a graceful manner. The horses of Ava are small, but very hardy and active. Contrary to the practice of other Eastern countries, they castrate their horses, and are thus enabled to maintain them with little trouble and expense, and can also turn a number loose in a field together, without any risk of their injuring one another. Horses are frequently exported in timber ships bound for Madras, and other parts of the coast, where they are disposed of to considerable advantage.

The government of Ava is extremely attentive to provide, in times of peace, for the contingencies of war. The royal magazines, I was told, could furnish 20,000 firelocks, which, if they resembled the specimens I saw, cannot be very formidable. These have been imported, at different periods in-

to the country, by ships trading to Rangoon and other parts of the empire, and are either of French manufacture, or condemned muskets from the English arsenals in India. The Birmans are very fond of their arms, of which they take great care. Their gunsmiths, who are all natives of Cassay, keep them in repair; but they are in general so bad as to be out of the power of art to render them serviceable. I saw a tolerably good fowling piece, which they said was entirely the work of a Cassay artificer. This, however, was allowed to be an extraordinary effort of genius. The person who showed it me, presented me, at the same time, with a bamboo, which threw out a short spear of iron by means of a spring. It was executed by the maker of the gun, and seemed to be formed after a model of an English walking stick, that contained a concealed spike. The imitation evinced much ingenuity, although the workmanship was coarse, and the iron badly polished.

By far the most respectable part of the Birman military force is their establishment of war-boats. Every town of note in the vicinity of the river, is obliged to furnish a certain number of men, and one or more boats, in proportion to the magnitude of the place. I was informed, that the king can command, at a very short notice, 500 of these vessels. They are constructed out of the solid trunk of the teak tree, which is excavated partly by fire and partly by cutting. The largest are from eighty to one hundred feet long, but the breadth seldom exceeds eight feet, and even this space is produced by artificially extending the sides after the trunk has been hollowed. They carry from fifty to sixty rowers, who use short oars that work on a spindle. The

proW is solid, and has a flat surface, on which, when they go to war, a piece of ordnance is mounted, a six, a nine, or even a twelve pounder. The gun-carriage is secured by lashings to strong bolts on each side, and swivels are frequently fired on the curvature of the stern.

Each rower is provided with a sword and a lance, which are placed by his side whilst he plies the oars. Besides the boatmen, there are usually thirty soldiers on board, who are armed with muskets. Thus prepared, they go in fleets to meet the foe, and, when in sight, draw up in a line, presenting their prows to the enemy. Their attack is extremely impetuous; they advance with great rapidity, and sing a war-song, at once to encourage their people, daunt their adversaries, and regulate the strokes of their oars. They generally endeavour to grapple, and when that is effected, the action becomes very severe, as these people are endued with great courage, strength, and activity. In times of peace, they are fond of exercising in their boats, and I have often been entertained with the dexterity they display in the management of them. The vessels being low in the water, their greatest danger is that of being run down by a larger boat striking on their broadside—a misfortune which the steersman is taught to dread, and to avoid above all others. It is surprising to see the facility with which they steer, and elude each other in their mock combats. The rowers are also practised to row backwards, and impel the vessel with the stern foremost. This is the mode of retreat, by means of which the artillery still bears upon their opponent. The largest of the war-boats do not draw more than three feet

water. When a person of rank is on board, there is a sort of moving tilt or canopy, for his particular accommodation, placed sometimes in the centre, and sometimes on the prow. The sides of the boat are either gilt as far as the water's edge, or plain, according to the rank of the person it carries. Gilded boats are only permitted to princes of the blood, or to persons holding the highest stations, such as a Maywoon of a province, and a minister of state.

It is by no means improbable, that the use of gunpowder was well known in India before its effects were discovered in the west; yet there is not any reason to believe, that the natives of Ava applied it to the purpose of musketry, till Europeans instructed them in the art. According to Indian accounts, cannon were fabricated in the East long before the era of European conquest. Their artillery, however, was not capable of being transported with facility, or at all used in the field. They were made of iron bars beaten into a cylindrical form, rudely put together, but of great strength, and enormous weight, from which, when raised on a rampart or tower, they threw huge stones to annoy the enemy. The musket was first introduced into the Pegue and Ava countries by the Portuguese, and is an implement of war which the inhabitants unwisely prefer to their own native weapons, the spear and sabre—a partiality that is highly prejudicial to themselves, for nothing can be less formidable than such fire-arms as they possess, or have the means of procuring. The proper indigenous weapons of the country are the spear, the javelin, which is thrown from the hand, the cross-bow, and the sabre. The latter is

used by the Birmans not only as an implement of war, but is likewise applied to various purposes as an instrument of manual labour. With this the peasant fells trees, shapes timbers, cuts bamboos, or defends himself against an enemy and wild beasts. He never travels without it, and generally, when on a journey, carries a shield on his left arm. They encumber themselves with less baggage than perhaps any other people; and are satisfied with a scanty portion of the hardest fare.

In their food, the Birmans, compared with the Indians, are gross and uncleanly. Although their religion forbids the slaughter of animals in general, yet they apply the interdiction only to those that are domesticated. All game is eagerly sought after, and in many places it is publicly sold. Reptiles also, such as lizards, guanas, and snakes, constitute a part of the subsistence of the lower classes. During our voyage up the river, the boatmen, after we had brought to, used frequently to hunt for camelions and lizards among the thickets. They are extremely fond of vegetables. At those places where garden greens were not to be procured, they gathered wild sorrel, and sometimes substituted the tender leaves of trees. These, boiled with rice, and moistened with a little oil, or seasoned with gnapee, or pickled sprat, compose a meal with which a Birman peasant or boatman is satisfied. The higher ranks, however, live with more delicacy, although their fare is never very sumptuous.

The climate of every part of the Birman empire which I have visited, bore testimony to its salubrity, by the best possible criterion, the ap-

pearance and vigour of the natives. The seasons are regular, and the extremes of heat and cold are seldom experienced; at least, the duration of that intense heat which immediately precedes the commencement of the rainy season is so short, that it incommodes but for a very little time. During our residence in the country, we lost only one man by disease. Another * met an accidental death; in wandering through the woods he became the prey of a tiger.

The soil of the southern provinces of the Birman empire is remarkably fertile, and produces as luxuriant crops of rice as are to be found in the finest parts of Bengal. Farther northward the country becomes irregular and mountainous; but the plains and valleys, particularly near the river, are exceedingly fruitful. They yield good wheat, and the various kinds of small grain which grow in Hindostan; as likewise legumes, and most of the esculent vegetables of India. Sugar canes, tobacco of a superior quality, indigo, cotton, and the different tropical fruits, in perfection, are all indigenous products of this favoured land.

Besides the teak tree, which grows in many parts of the Birman empire, as well to the north of Ummerapoorra, as in the southern country, there is almost every description of timber that is known in India. Dr Buchanan, in one of his afternoon excursions, perceived a large log of fir, which, his attendant informed him, had been washed down by the torrents from a mountainous part of the country, four days journey northward of the capital, where it grows in abundance, and of consider-

* This unfortunate man belonged to the Seahorse.

able magnitude. The natives call it Tænyo. They extract the turpentine, which they turn to use, but consider the wood of little value, on account of its softness. If they could be prevailed upon to transport it to Rangoon, it might prove a beneficial material to the navigation of India. Topgallant masts and yards made of teak are thought to be too heavy. European and American spars are often bought for these purposes at a very exorbitant price—an inconvenience which the fir of Ava, if conveyed to the market, would probably obviate.

The kingdom of Ava abounds in minerals. Six days' journey from Bamoo, near the frontiers of China, there are mines of gold and silver, called Badouem. There are also mines of gold, silver, rubies, and sapphires at present open on a mountain near the Keenduem, Woobolootaun; but the most valuable, and those which produce the finest jewels, are in the vicinity of the capital, nearly opposite to Keoum-meoum. Precious stones are found in several other parts of the empire. The inferior minerals, such as contain iron, tin, lead, antimony, arsenic, sulphur, &c. are met with in great abundance. Amber, of a consistence unusually pure and pellucid, is dug up in large quantities near the river. Gold, likewise, is discovered in the sandy beds of streams which descend from the mountains. Between the Keenduem and the Irrawaddy, to the northward, there is a small river called Shoe Lien Kioup, or the Stream of Golden Sand.

Diamonds and emeralds are not produced in any part of the Ava empire; but it affords amethysts, garnets, very beautiful chrysolites, jasper, loadstone, and marble. The quarries of the latter are only a few miles from Ummerapoora. It is equal

in quality to the finest marble of Italy, and admits of a polish that renders it almost transparent. Blocks of any size that it is possible to transport might be procured, but the sale is prohibited; nor is it allowed to be carried away without a special order. Images of Gaudma being chiefly composed of this material, it is on that account held sacred. Birmans may not purchase the marble in mass, but are suffered and indeed encouraged to buy figures of the deity ready made. Exportation of their gods out of the kingdom is strictly forbidden. The city of Chagain is the principal manufactory of these marble divinities.

An extensive trade is carried on between the capital of the Birman dominions and Yunan in China. The principal article of export from Ava is cotton, of which I was informed there are two kinds, one of a brown colour, of which nankeens are made, the other white, like the cotton of India. I did not see any of the former. This commodity is transported up the Irrawaddy in large boats, as far as Bamoo, where it is bartered at the common jee or mart, with Chinese merchants, and conveyed by the latter, partly by land, and partly by water, into the Chinese dominions. Amber, ivory, precious stones, beetle nut, and the edible nests brought from the eastern archipelago, are also articles of commerce. In return, the Birmans procure raw and wrought silks, velvets, gold leaf, preserves, paper, and some utensils of hardware.

The commerce between the capital and the southern parts of the empire is facilitated by the noble river that waters the country. Its principal objects are the necessaries of life. Several thousand boats are annually employed in transporting

rice from the lower provinces, to supply Ummera-poorá, and the northern districts. Salt and gnapee may likewise be reckoned under the same head. Articles of foreign importation are mostly conveyed up the Irrawaddy; a few are introduced by way of Arracan, and carried over the mountains on the heads of coolies, or labourers. European broadcloth, a small quantity of hardware, coarse Bengal muslins, Cossembuzar silk handkerchiefs, China ware, which will not admit of land carriage and glass, are the principal commodities. Coconuts also, brought from the Nicobar Islands, where they are of uncommon excellence, are looked upon as a delicacy, and bear a high price. Merchants carry down silver, lac, precious stones, and some other articles to no great amount. A considerable sum of money is annually laid out at the capital in the purchase of marble statues of Gaudma, which are all fabricated in the district of Chagáin, opposite Awa-haung, or ancient Ava. They are not permitted to be made at any other place.

The Birmans, like the Chinese, have no coin. Silver in bullion, and lead, are the current monies of the country; weight and purity are, of course, the standard of value, and in the ascertainment of both the natives are exceedingly scrupulous and expert. What foreigners call a tackal, properly kiat, is the most general piece of silver in circulation; it weighs ten pennyweights ten grains and three-fourths. Its subdivisions are, the tubbee, two of which make one moo; two moo one math; four math one tackal, and one hundred tackal compose one viss. Money scales and weights are all fabricated at the capital, where they are stamped

and afterwards circulated throughout the empire ; the use of any others is prohibited.

Rice is sold by a measure called Tayndaung, or basket ; the weight is sixteen viss, about fifty-six pounds. There are many subdivisions of measurement. The average price of rice at the capital is one tackal, rather more than half-a-crown, for a basket and a half. At Rangoon and Martaban, one tackal will purchase four or five baskets.

The bankers, called by foreigners Pymon, are likewise workers in silver, and assayers of metal. This is a class of people very numerous, and indispensably necessary, as no stranger can undertake either to pay or receive money without having it first examined. Every merchant has a banker of this description, with whom he lodges all his cash, and who, for receiving and paying, gets an established commission of one per cent. ; in consideration of which, he is responsible for the quality of what goes through his hands ; and in no instance did I ever hear of a breach of trust committed by one of these bankers. The quantity of alloy varies in the silver current in different parts of the empire. At Rangoon it is adulterated twenty-five per cent. ; at Ummerapoora, pure, or what is called flowered silver, is most common. In this latter all royal dues are paid. The several modifications are as follows ;

Rouni,	or pure silver.
Rounika,	5 per cent. of alloy.
Rounizee,	10 per cent.
Rouassee,	20 per cent.
Moowadzoo,	25 per cent.
Woombo,	30 per cent.

Any person may have his silver either purified

or depreciated to whatever standard he chooses. The nearest silversmith will be glad to perform the work, free from charge for his labour, as the bringer by the operation must lose a trifle, which the artist gains. The small quantity of metal that adheres to the crucible is his profit. I was informed, that the silversmith can sell these crucibles afterwards to refiners for forty tackals a thousand, and that an adequate gain accrues to the purchaser from the metal extracted from the pot after it is broken.

The Birman measures of length are, the Paulgaut, or inch, eighteen of which compose the Tiam, or cubit.

The Saundaung, or royal cubit, * equal to twenty-two inches.

The Dha, or Bamboo, which consists of seven royal cubits; 1000 dha make one Birman league, or Dian, nearly equal to two British miles and two furlongs. The league is also subdivided into tenths. The Birmans keep their accounts in decimals, after the manner of the Chinese.

It has already been noticed, that the general disposition of the Birmans is strikingly contrasted with that of the natives of India, from whom they are separated only by a narrow range of mountains, in many places admitting of an easy intercourse. Notwithstanding the small extent of this barrier, the physical difference between the nations could scarcely be greater, had they been situated at the opposite extremities of the globe. The Birmans are a lively, inquisitive race, active,

* This cubit varies according to the will of the monarch.

irascible, and impatient. The character of their Bengal neighbours is too well known as the reverse, to need any delineation. The unworthy passion of jealousy, which prompts most nations of the East to immure their women within the walls of an haram, and surround them with guards, seems to have scarcely any influence over the minds of this extraordinary and more liberal people. Birman wives and daughters are not concealed from the sight of men, and are suffered to have as free intercourse with each other as the rules of European society admit. But, in other respects, women have just reason to complain of their treatment. They are considered as not belonging to the same scale of the creation as men, and even the law stamps a degrading distinction between the sexes. The evidence of a woman is not received as of equal weight with that of a man; and a woman is not suffered to ascend the steps of a court of justice, but is obliged to deliver her testimony on the outside of the roof. The custom of selling their women to strangers, which has before been adverted to, is confined to the lowest classes of society, and is perhaps oftener the consequence of heavy pecuniary embarrassment, than an act of inclination. It is not, however, considered as shameful, nor is the female dishonoured. Partly, perhaps, from this cause, and partly from their habits of education, women surrender themselves the victims of this barbarous custom with apparent resignation. It is also said, that they are very seldom unfaithful to their foreign masters; indeed they are often essentially useful, particularly to those who trade, by keeping their accounts and transacting their business. But when

a man departs from the country, he is not suffered to carry his temporary wife along with him. On that point the law is exceedingly rigorous. Every ship, before she receives her clearance, is diligently searched by the officers of the custom-house. Even if their vigilance were to be eluded, the woman would be quickly missed, and it would be soon discovered in what vessel she had gone; nor could that ship ever return to a Birman port but under penalty of confiscation of the property, and the infliction of a heavy fine and imprisonment on the master. Female children also, born of a Birman mother, are not suffered to be taken away. Men are permitted to emigrate; but they think that the expatriation of women would impoverish the state, by diminishing the sources of its population.

One vice is usually the parent of another. The Birmans, being exempt from that of jealousy, do not resort to the diabolical practice of emasculating male children, to educate them as spies over their women. Chastity, they know, is more safely guarded by principles of honour and attachment than by moats or castles. When Arracan was conquered by the Birmans, several eunuchs were made prisoners, belonging to the prince of the country, who had adopted that degenerate custom of Mahomedan growth. These people are maintained by the Birman monarch rather as memorials of his conquest, than for any services they are required to perform. Infidelity is not a characteristic of Birman wives. In general they have too much employment to leave leisure for the corruption of their minds. A woman of the highest rank seldom sits in idleness at home. Her female ser-

vants, like those of Grecian dames of antiquity, ply 'the various labours of the loom,' whilst the mistress superintends and directs their industry. On the occasion of the formal visit to the mother of the present Queen, we observed in one of the galleries of her palace, three or four looms at work, wrought by the damsels of her household. Weaving is chiefly a female occupation. Most Birman families make all the cotton and silk cloth that is required for their domestic consumption.

The Birmans, in some points of their disposition, display the ferocity of barbarians, and in others, all the humanity and tenderness of a polished life. They inflict the most savage vengeance on their enemies. As invaders, desolation marks their tract, for they spare neither sex nor age. But at home they assume a different character. There they manifest benevolence, by extending aid to the infirm, the aged, and the sick. Filial piety is inculcated as a sacred precept, and its duties are religiously observed. A common beggar is nowhere to be seen. Every individual is certain of receiving sustenance, which, if he cannot procure it by his own labour, is provided for him by others.

During the several excursions which we made into the country, we did not perceive any of the feathered tribe that were peculiar to this part of the world, or that were not to be met with in India, the ornithology of which is already well known. The Henza, the symbol of the Birman nation, as the eagle was of the Roman empire, is a species of wild fowl, called in India the Braminy goose; but the natives of Ava do not deify the bird. Of the beasts of Ava, the only one that I saw, with which

I was unacquainted, was the ichneumon, or the rat of Pharaoh, called by the natives Ounbaili. It is a singular circumstance, that there should not be such an animal as the jackal in the Ava dominions, considering that they are so numerous in the adjoining country. Pegue abounds in elephants; for though they are to be met with in other parts of the empire, that seems to be their favourite abode. One of his Birman majesty's titles is, Lord of the White Elephant, and of all the Elephants in the World.

The Birmans divide their time as follows:

The space in which the finger can be raised and depressed is called charazi. Ten charazi make one piaan; six piaan one bizana (about a minute). The day, of twenty-four hours, commencing at noon, is divided into eight portions, or yettee, of three hours each, thus denominated.

Moon Yettee, or noon.

Loung Yettee, 3 P. M.

Lay Yettee, 6 P. M.

Gneah Yettee, 9 P. M.

Gneah Gnek Yettee, midnight.

Gneah Laghee Loung Yettee, 3 in the morning.

Mioh Ling Yettee, 6 A. M.

Gneah Tek Yettee, 9 A. M.

These divisions of time are ascertained by a machine resembling the hour-glass, and sometimes by a perforated pan placed in a tub of water. They are announced by a stroke on an oblong drum, which is always kept near the dwelling of the chief magistrate of the city, town, or village. It is commonly raised on a high bamboo stage, with a roof of mats to protect it from the weather.

The edifice at the royal palace for the reception of this instrument is of masonry, and very lofty, whence the sound is said to be distinctly conveyed to the remotest extremes of the city.

The Birman year is divided into twelve months, which, strictly speaking, cannot be called synodical, although they comprehend the same number of days. A revolution of the moon, in passing from one conjunction with the sun to another, is performed in 29 days 12 hours and 44 minutes; but the Birman lunations consist of 29 and 30 days, alternate, which causes a difference between the Newtonian and Birman lunar account of 8 hours and 48 minutes. The Birman months are as follow :

	Days.
Tagoo contains	29
Kayoung	30
Nay Young	29
Wazoo	30
Wagoung	29
Toozelien	30
Sandaing Guite	29
Tazoung Moang	30
Gnadoh	29
Peeazoo	30
Taboodway	29
Taboung	30
	354

In order to complete a solar revolution, they intercalate in every third year a month of 30 days, which is called Toodea Wazoo. In this third year the months of Tagoo and Nay Young have each 30 days instead of 29. They likewise sup-

press or pass over a day, which, if reckoned, would either be the 31st Taboung or the 1st of Tagoo. By these means, the number of days in the three solar years is thus computed.

	Days.
Three lunar years, of 354 days each	1062
Intercalary month in the third year	30
Two intercalary days in Tagoo and Nay	
Young - - -	2
Suppressed, or passed over at the end of	
the year - - -	1
	1095

This computation corresponds, in the number of days, with three years. Every fourth year, however, will occasion the difference of a day on account of our bissextile or leap year. Of this the Birmans are fully sensible, as well as of many other defects in their manner of reckoning. To remedy the confusion likely to ensue from such erroneous calculations, their style or mode has frequently been altered by arbitrary authority. His present Birman majesty, however, is so desirous to ascertain and establish, by accurate tables, a permanent and unvarying measurement of time, that he made an application to the late Governor-general of India to send to his capital a Bramin well versed in astronomy, to assist the deliberations of his council of professors, among whom his majesty always presides in person; and he is said to be no inconsiderable proficient in the science of astronomy.

The manner in which the Birman month is subdivided, I imagine, is peculiar to their nation. In-

stead of reckoning the days progressively from the commencement to the close of the month, they advance no farther than the full moon, from which they recede by retrogressive enumeration until the month is finished.

Thus, the new moon is called

Lahzan terrait gnay, or first day of the increasing moon.

Lahzan gnerait gnay, second day, &c.

Lahzan loungrait gnay, third day, &c.

Lahzan layrait gnay, fourth day, &c.

Lahzan narait gnay, fifth day, &c.

Lahzan kioukrait gnay, sixth day, &c.

Lahzan koonrait gnay, seventh day, &c.

Lahzan sheaseddainrait gnay, eighth day, &c.

Lahzan karait gnay, ninth day, &c.

Lahzan sayrait gnay, tenth day, &c.

Lahzan say-terrait gnay, eleventh day, &c.

Lahzan say-gnerrait gnay, twelfth day, &c.

Lahzan say soungrait gnay, thirteenth day, &c.

Lahzan tassay sayrait gnay, fourteenth day, &c.

Lah bee, fifteenth day, &c.

Lah bee-goo terrait gnay, or the first day of the decreasing moon.

The seventeenth, eighteenth, &c. correspond with the second and third of the increasing moon, substituting Lah Bee-goo for Lahzan. The last day of the month, whether of twenty-nine or thirty days, is called Lah gnay.

The Birman month is divided into four weeks of seven days each. The days are distinguished by the following names.

Tamaing nuaye, Sunday, the first day of the Birman week.

Talain lah, . Monday.

Aing gah, . . . Tuesday.
Boodt-hoo, . . . Wednesday.
Keah-subbeday, Thursday.
Zoup keah, . . . Friday.
Sunnay, . . . Saturday.

The eighth day of the increasing moon, the fifteenth or full moon, the eighth of the decreasing moon, and the last day of the moon, are religiously observed by Birmans as sacred festivals. On these hebdomanal holidays no public business is transacted in the Rhoom; mercantile dealings are suspended; handicraft is forbidden; and the strictly pious take no sustenance between the rising and the setting of the sun; but this latter instance of self-denial is not very common, and, as I understood, is rarely practised, except in the metropolis, where the appearance of sanctity is sometimes assumed as a ladder by which the crafty attempt to climb to promotion. The sovereign himself is a great favourer of the austerities of the Birman religion; and his chief minister, or Woon-gee, has for many years on a Birman sabbath abstained from food so long as the sun continues above the horizon.

The Birmans are extremely fond both of poetry and music; they call the former Yeddoo. When repeated by a scholar, it flows soft and measured to the ear. It is sometimes in successive, and often in alternate rhimes. A line is called Tageoung; a stanza, Tubbouk. They have epic as well as religious poems of high celebrity; and they are fond of reciting in heroic numbers the exploits of their kings and generals. I was informed, that the prowess of Alompra is recorded in verses not unworthy of a monarch.

Music is a science which is held in considerable estimation throughout the Birman empire, and is cultivated at the present day more generally than in India, notwithstanding it is there termed, as by the ancient Greeks, the language of the gods. The royal library of Ummerapoorra is said to contain many valuable treatises on the art. Some of the professional musicians display considerable skill and execution, and the softer airs are pleasing even to an ear unaccustomed to such melody. The principal instruments are a Soum, or harp, made of light wood, hollowed and varnished, in shape somewhat like a canoe with a deck. At the extremity a piece of hard wood is neatly fastened, which tapers to the end, and rising curves over the body of the harp. From this curvature the strings, usually made of wire, are extended to a bridge on the belly of the instrument. There are two sounding holes, one on each side of the bridge. The size of the Soum varies from two to five feet in length.

The Tur resembles our violin; it has only three strings, and is played on with a bow. I at first imagined it had been of European introduction, and brought to Pegue by the Portuguese; but I was assured it was an original instrument of the country.

The Pullaway, is a common flagelet.

The Kyezoup, is a collection of cymbals, which are suspended in a bamboo frame. These cymbals, varying in size, produce modulated gradations of sounds. There were eighteen in the Kyezoup that I saw.

The Patola, or guitar, is a curious instrument.

It is the exact form of a crocodile in miniature ; the body of which is hollow, with sounding holes on the back. Three strings of wire extend from the shoulder to the tail, and are supported on bridges at each extremity. The strings are tuned by means of pegs in the tail, to which they are fastened. It is played on by the finger, and is generally used to accompany the voice.

The Boundaw is a collection of drums, oblong in form, and varying in size, which are suspended perpendicularly in a wooden frame by leather thongs. The whole machine is about five feet in diameter, and four feet high. The performer stands in the centre, and beats on the drums with a small stick. This instrument is always introduced when there is a full band, and is much used in processions, being carried by two men, whilst the performer shuffles along in the inside, playing as he goes.

The Heem is the pipe of Pan, formed of several reeds neatly joined together, and sounded by a common mouth-piece. When played with skill, it produces a very plaintive melody.

These are the principal instruments of music in use among the Birmans. Dr Buchanan purchased a complete concert set for fifty-four tackal, which is about five or six guineas. Melody has charms for all mankind. Among the boatmen that rowed my barge, I doubt whether there was one who did not possess an instrument of some sort. He who could procure no better, had what we call a Jew's harp, with which he delighted to beguile half an hour of a cool evening, after a day of hard labour under a burning sun.

Of the ancient Pallis, * whose language constitutes at the present day the sacred text of Ava, Pegue, and Siam, as well as of several other countries eastward of the Ganges ; and of their migration from India to the banks of the Cali, the Nile of Ethiopia, we have but very imperfect information. As a nation, they have long ago ceased to exist. They are said to have possessed, in former times, a dominion stretching from the Indus as far as Siam, and to have been conquered by the Rajaputras, who changed the name of their country from Palisthan to Rajaputra. In the old books of the Hindoos they are called Paliputras, and it may, I think, be concluded that they were the Palibothri of the ancients.

It has been the opinion of some of the most enlightened writers † on the languages of the East, that the Pali, the sacred language of the priests of Boodh, is nearly allied to the Shanscrit of the Bra- mins ; and there certainly is much of that holy

* In Captain Wilford's elaborate and learned Dissertation on Egypt and the Nile, from the ancient books of the Hindoos, there is the following passage :

‘ The history of the Pallis cannot fail to be interesting, especially as it will be found much connected with that of Europe ; and I hope soon to be supplied with materials for a full account of them. Even their miserable remains in India must excite compassion, when we consider how great they once were, and from what height they fell, through the intolerant zeal and superstition of their neighbours. Their features are peculiar, and their language different, but perhaps not radically, from that of the other Hindoos. Their villages are still called Palli.’—*Asiat. Research. Vol. III.*

† Captain Wilford on Egypt and the Nile.—Loubere's Account of Siam.—Chambers on the Ruins of Mavalipuram.—*Asiat. Research. Vol. I.*

idiom engrafted on the vulgar language of Ava, by the introduction of the Hindoo religion. The character in common use throughout Ava and Pegue is a round Nagari, derived from the square Pali, or religious text. It is formed of circles and segments of circles, variously disposed and combined; whilst the Pali, which is solely applied to the purposes of religion, is a square letter, chiefly consisting of right angles.

The Birman language contains thirty-three simple sounds, to represent which, their alphabet, commonly called Kagye Kague, consists of an equal number of distinct characters, exclusive of various marks and contractions, that supply the place of long and short vowels, diphthongs, &c. These are explained and enumerated in separate series, in the Birman Spelling-book, entitled, Kayn-boungie, in which every possible combination is given and exemplified.

It should be observed here, that there is no representation of the vowel corresponding with our short *ă*, as from the frequent occurrence of that sound in the middle and at the end of words, it was found convenient to omit it in writing; it is nevertheless to be pronounced after every simple sound or consonant not supplied with another vowel, unless it be forbidden by a mark of elision placed over the letter, or excluded by the junction of two or more consonants, in the form of a compound character. These singularities, I am informed by Mr Wilkins, are common to all the alphabets of the Hindoo class.

The Birmans write from left to right, and though they leave no distinguishing space between their

words, they mark the pauses of a sentence and the full stops. Their letters are distinct, and their manuscripts are in general very beautiful.

The common books of the Birmans, like those of the Hindoos, particularly of such as inhabit the southern parts of India, are composed of the palmyra leaf, on which the letters are engraved with a stylus; but the Birmans far excel the Braminical Hindoos in the neatness of the execution, and in the ornamental part of their volumes. In every Kioum, or monastery, there is a library or repository of books, usually kept in lacquered chests. Books in the Pali text are sometimes composed of thin stripes of bamboo, delicately plaited, and varnished over in such a manner as to form a smooth and hard surface upon a leaf of any dimensions. This surface is afterwards gilded, and the sacred letters are traced upon it in black and shining japan. The margin is illumined by wreaths and figures of gold, on a red, green, or black ground.

In the recitation of poetry, the language is exceedingly melodious. Even the prose of common conversation appears to be measured; and the concluding word of each sentence is lengthened by a musical cadence, that marks the period to the ear of a person wholly unacquainted with the meaning.

It is difficult to ascertain with precision the exact limits of the Birman empire. Dr Buchanan, who accompanied me, sought for geographical information with the most diligent inquiry. He procured, but not without considerable trouble and expense, sketches of every part of the Birman

territories ; and he has transmitted the materials which he thus collected to the East India Company. Those sketches, however, being contained in various and detached pieces, not forming any connected body, nor yet reduced to a graduated scale, can hardly be brought into the shape of a regular map, without the aid of some further communications. They are nevertheless documents of much intrinsic value and importance. It is therefore to be hoped that, with the aid of some additional lights, a vacuum on the terrestrial globe will, ere long, be filled up, and a portion of the earth delineated, which heretofore has been very imperfectly known. On a probable calculation from Dr Buchanan's papers of the extent of the present Birman empire, it appears to include the space between the 9th and 26th degrees of north latitude, and between the 92d and 107th degrees of longitude east of Greenwich, about 1050 geographical miles in length, and 600 in breadth. These are the ascertainable limits, taken from the Birman accounts ; but it is probable that their dominions stretch still farther to the north. It should, however, be remarked, that the breadth often varies, and is in many places very inconsiderable, on what is called the Eastern Peninsula.

Dr Buchanan, in the summary* or general outline of the geographical materials which he collected, thus expresses himself on the subject of rivers :—It appears, ‘ that the Arracan river is ‘ not so considerable as has been supposed, but

* Extracts from the Bengal Political Letter, 11th of September 1797.

‘ takes its rise in hills at no great distance to the
‘ north.

‘ That the river coming from Thibet, which is
‘ supposed to be that of Arracan, is in fact the
‘ Keenduem, or the great western branch of the
‘ Ava river.

‘ That what is supposed to be the western branch
‘ of the Irrawaddy, is in fact the eastern one,
‘ which passes by Ava, and runs to the north,
‘ keeping west from the province of Yunan, and
‘ leaving between it and that part of China a coun-
‘ try subject to the Birmans.

‘ That the Loukiang, which is supposed to be
‘ the great branch of the Irrawaddy, has no com-
‘ munication with that river; but on entering the
‘ Birman dominions assumes the name of Thaluayn,
‘ or Thanluayn, and falls into the sea at Martaban.

‘ That the river of Pegue, which is supposed to
‘ come from China, rises among hills about 100
‘ miles from the sea, and which form the boundary
‘ between the Birman and Pegue kingdoms.

‘ That between the Pegue and Martaban rivers
‘ there is a lake, from which two rivers proceed.
‘ The one runs north to Old Ava, where it joins
‘ the Myoungnya, or Little River of Ava, which
‘ comes from mountains on the frontiers of China;
‘ the other river runs south from the lake to the
‘ sea, and is the Sitang river in the map.

‘ That the rivers of China, which are supposed
‘ to be the heads of the Pegue river, are those of
‘ the river of Siam.

‘ That the rivers of Siam and Cambodia com-
‘ municate by a very considerable branch, called
‘ the Annan.

This disposition of the rivers gives an entire new face to the geography of India extra Gangem; and from the diligence and ability with which Dr Buchanan collated the several accounts that he received, I am inclined to believe that his statement is nearly correct.

CHAPTER V.

CHAPTER V.

PERMISSION GRANTED TO MAKE ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATIONS—MESSAGE FROM THE KING—RIVER RISES—PRESENT OF WHEAT—BEES—HONEY—BENGAL PAINTER EMPLOYED AT COURT—MODE OF CATCHING WILD ELEPHANTS—KING SOLICITOUS TO INTRODUCE THE ART OF GLASS-MAKING—ATTENTIONS FROM VICEROYS TO FOREIGN MINISTERS—LETTERS ARRIVE FROM BENGAL—OUR PEOPLE HEALTHY—CHINESE THE REVERSE—THE CAUSE—CEREMONY ARRANGED—PROCESSION—MANNER OF ENTRANCE—INTRODUCTION INTO THE LOTOO, OR GRAND COUNCIL HALL—DESCRIPTION OF THE COURT—ITS MAGNIFICENCE—KING NOT PRESENT—QUESTIONS PROPOSED—BANQUET—FORMALITIES OBSERVED IN RETURNING.

THE occurrences that took place in the interval between our arrival and the 30th of August, the day appointed for our formal introduction, were not of sufficient importance to require a minute relation. We enjoyed whatever personal convenience the country could supply; and I gladly embraced every opportunity to evince the most implicit confidence, which I am induced to think was

productive of beneficial consequences. To my public character, as will appear in the sequel, the conduct of the Birman court was punctilious and haughty, even to insufferable arrogance; but my accommodation and security, as an individual, were attended to with all the urbanity that could be expected from the most polished state of Europe.

Geography is the foundation of all historical knowledge, without which history becomes little better than romance. Having hitherto found the most authentic geographical information that I could obtain, respecting countries eastward of the Ganges, to be extremely erroneous, I was on that account more particularly desirous to determine the true situation of the capital of Ava, especially as I had now a favourable opportunity of profiting by the assistance of a gentleman of high professional talents. It seemed expedient, however, to obtain the sanction of the Birman government, before I authorized Mr Wood to commence astronomical observations; and, in reply to an application I made through the Maywoon of Pegue, I received the most liberal acquiescence—a compliment that was afterwards enhanced by a gracious message from his Birman majesty, desiring to know, according to our calculation, the exact time when the expected eclipse of the moon was to take place, and, as it was partial, what portion of the lunar body would be in shade? Mr Wood satisfied him in both particulars, and we were informed that the king, on comparing Mr Wood's account with his own predictions (for he is said to be himself an adept in the science), discovered only a slight difference in the segment of the moon.

which was to be obscured. Mr Wood's knowledge procured him considerable respect among the better informed natives, but it excited the terror of the vulgar. Being obliged at night to leave the grove and go out on the plain, in order to have a distinct view of the heavenly bodies, the peasants that inhabited the neighbouring villages believed him to be a necromancer, and his telescope and time-keeper instruments of magic. In their wonder, they sometimes crowded about him so as to disturb his operations; but it was nothing more than harmless curiosity. They wanted to discover by what means he held communication with the Natts, the supernatural and invisible agents of the air.

The river, which had now risen to its utmost height, had encroached so much on the grove, as to threaten a general inundation; and we began to think it not improbable that we should be obliged some night hastily to change our residence from the house to the boats. The cause of the swelling of the waters was not apparent, as there had not fallen with us a sufficient quantity of rain to produce the smallest alteration in the body of the river. The Birmans, however, who knew the exact limit to which it would rise, laughed at our proposing to make arrangements for a sudden embarkation, and assured us that, within the memory of man, the floods had never surpassed a certain boundary.

Although, from the nature of the grounds in the neighbourhood of our dwelling, rice was the only grain that could be cultivated, we understood that on the other side of the lake, near the city, there were extensive fields of wheat, which, from the samples brought to us, seemed to be equal in quality to the finest growth of England. The market

price of Ummerapoorra was one tackal, nearly half a crown, for a taindaung, or basket weighing about fifty-six pounds ; but we had no occasion to purchase any, as the provision made by the commissary of government, and the presents from those who visited us, kept our store-room full. Every person who came brought something, either fruit, flowers, a plate of fine rice, of wheat, or some similar mark of respect. In return, I treated those of the higher order with tea and sweetmeats. Of the former they were extremely fond ; and I can truly say, that from ten in the morning until evening, the tea equipage was never unemployed. An old man who acted as commissary, and lived in the rhoom adjacent to our dwelling, whose title was Kyewoon, brought all the females of his family to see us. They produced as their offering, fresh honeycombs hanging from branches of the bamboo tree. The honey was dropping from the boughs into pans. I was told that the bees were wild in the woods, and in such plenty, that wax formed a staple article of commerce. The natives have a mode of gathering the honey without destroying the insect. The soldiers of the guard and our domestics continued to receive two tackal, at stated periods, in addition to their allowance of rice ; and beetle-leaf was to be had fresh from gardens belonging to the adjacent villages. In one of these plantations, which very much resembled an English hop-garden, I saw a man watering his plants by means of a wheel, which raised water out of a well from a considerable depth. The machine was constructed with much ingenuity.

The reputation that my Bengal draughtsman had acquired by his botanical drawings, performed

under the inspection of Dr Buchanan, having come to the knowledge of his Birman majesty, or, in the Birman phrase, having reached the Golden Ears, the king was pleased to desire a specimen of his skill, and sent over a painting on glass, executed by a Siamese artist in his own service, signifying his royal will that it should be copied upon paper. This picture, which was a tolerable performance, represented the mode of catching wild elephants in the forests. It was thus described to me. The hunters, mounted on tame elephants that are trained to the business, by lying flat on their backs, introduce themselves unnoticed into a wild herd, and take an opportunity to cast a running noose in the tract of the one that is meant to be secured. The other end of the rope is fastened to the body of the tame elephant, who immediately throws the wild one down. A battle then ensues, in which the trained elephant, being assisted by its associates, soon overpowers the inhabitant of the woods, who is deserted by all the others. It is afterwards borne away a prisoner, fast bound to two of its captors, whilst another moves on at its head, and a fourth urges it behind. In a few weeks, by proper discipline, the animal becomes docile, and submits to its fate. Those that are taken in the manner delineated in the Plate, I was told, are for the most part females. Male elephants are usually enticed by the blandishments of the females, * trained for the purpose,

* For a more ample description of the manner of catching wild elephants in Tipura, near the mountains that divide Bengal from the Birman dominions, see a Paper by John Corse Esq. (now John Corse Scott Esq. of Sinton), in the third Volume of the Asiatic Researches. The

into an enclosure or Keddah, from whence they cannot extricate themselves, and are easily secured. My painter performed the task so much to his majesty's satisfaction, that a request was made for his further services, in executing a drawing of a celebrated image of Gaudma, in which I willingly acquiesced. He was employed on it a week, and when it was finished, his majesty condescended to express his approbation of the performance, which was certainly much superior to any thing that his own painter could produce.

Among the articles of foreign trade which had found their way into the Birman country, nothing was held in higher estimation than the European glass-ware, imported into Rangoon from the British settlements in India. The art of vitrification has long been known and practised in most countries of the East. But no where they can make a pure transparent substance, like that which is brought from Europe. The Birman monarch, who is a great admirer of the manufacture, was particularly desirous to introduce it into his dominions; and supposing that every Englishman must be versed in the knowledge of making whatever comes from his own country, he sent a message to request that I would furnish his artificers with such instructions as might practice of Pegue differs somewhat from that of the Bengal hunters.

The Editor of these volumes has had an opportunity, through the kindness of Mr Scott of Sinton, of seeing several valuable papers which are now in his possession, and which were drawn up by him, upon this subject, as well as upon some other parts of the natural history of elephants; and, had his space permitted, would very gladly have availed himself of the permission he obligingly received, to make some extracts from them for the present work.

enable them to fabricate glass of a quality equal to what was made in England. Unluckily, none of us happened to be skilled in the mystery of a glass-house. All, therefore, that we could do, was to explain the principles of the art, which Dr Buchanan obligingly undertook ; and in order to facilitate the acquirement, and guide them in the practice, I lent them the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and pointed out the article where the process is fully explained. Baba Sheen and the Armenian interpreter translated it into the Birman tongue. But I much fear that the theory alone, conveyed in terms of science, will not, without practical experience, advance them very far in an art which his Birman majesty is so laudably solicitous to bring to perfection among his subjects.

It was a matter too remarkable to pass unnoticed, that of the numbers who did me the honour of a visit, there was not one that had any share in the administration of public affairs, the Woondock that met me at Pegahm excepted, who, though of distinguished rank, is but an inferior minister. None of the Wongees or Attawoons condescended to pay me the compliment. The Maywoon of Pegue sometimes honoured me with his company. His official consequence, however, was here diminished into insignificance, notwithstanding he was of the highest order, except one, of nobility, wearing a tzaloe of nine strings.

When a public minister is delegated from a foreign power to the Birman court, it is the established custom for the Maywoon, or governor of the frontier province which the minister first enters, to provide for his safe conveyance to the capital, and to attend to his convenience so long as he con-

tinues to reside in the country—a service which he is frequently obliged to perform in person, as in the present case of the English deputation. The governor of Bamoo, the province bordering on Yunan, performed the office to our Chinese neighbours with the utmost kindness and urbanity, and in his frequent visits to them took the opportunity of calling upon me. He was a sensible man, exceedingly courteous in his manner and address. He said that he had been twice to Peking in the capacity of legate before he obtained his present station ; and described the journey as very fatiguing, but, at the proper season, not at all perilous. He was upwards of three months in performing it. The road from the frontiers of the province of Bamoo until he penetrated far into Manchegee, or Yunan, lay through mountains. During the last thirty days he travelled in a boat on canals and rivers. He informed me that there were two languages spoken in China. One the Tirroup, or native Chinese ; the other the Tarrait, or Tartar tongue. The latter is the language of the conquerors. The Birmans have not liberty to pass at will into the Chinese territory, nor the Chinese into that of the Birmans ; but the governor has power to grant passports. He gave me an impression of the Chop, or seal, which he was accustomed to affix to such papers, and likewise promised me a chart of his route to Peking, which he afterwards presented to me. I had various occasions to acknowledge the attention and kindness of this truly well bred and intelligent man, who seemed to have profited from his travels, and to have overcome that affected reserve which is the national characteristic of a Birman courtier.

On the 15th of August, the arrival of a messenger from Rangoon, sent by Captain Thomas, as the bearer of letters and newspapers that had been brought from Calcutta, diffused among us that satisfaction which they only who have been in remote countries, and long absent from their friends, can truly estimate. It was the first communication we had received since our departure from Bengal, and the situation of affairs in Europe was at that time extremely interesting.

In addition to the comfort we experienced from living at ease, and having every want liberally supplied, our gratitude was due to Providence for the inestimable blessing of health, which we enjoyed to a degree that fully evinced the salubrity of the climate. Not a symptom of sickness, in a single instance excepted, had manifested itself among our people. But this was not the case with our Chinese neighbours. They were less fortunate. A dysentery, which had early attacked the senior member of the embassy, began to spread among his domestics; and, although they were not numerous, we heard of frequent deaths and of general illness among them. As no doubt could be entertained of the healthiness of the situation we were in, their malady was to be ascribed to some other cause than the atmosphere. The governor of Bamoo, however, explained the matter very sensibly, by observing, that the sickness under which they alone laboured, entirely originated in their own indolence, and in the pernicious diet that they used. The Chinese are said to be nationally great lovers of swine's flesh; and these personages possessed all the partiality of their country for that unclean animal. They had erec-

ted a pig-stye within the enclosure of their dwelling, where they fed pork for their own table, and, as a matter of compliment, sometimes sent a joint of the meat to me. But though it seemed to be good, we could not bring ourselves to use it. In addition to the ill effects of such gross food, they took no exercise, and drank immoderately of shou-chow, a fiery and deleterious spirit. The governor of Bamoo, who accounted for the cause of their ailment, condemned their sensuality, which, he said, he had in vain endeavoured to correct by advice and persuasion. At length the principal legate became so seriously ill that his life was judged to be in danger. The governor, anxious for the preservation of a person whose safety was in some degree intrusted to his care, with a humanity that did him honour, applied to me for medical assistance. Dr Buchanan willingly accompanied him to the sick man's chamber, and on examining his patient, immediately perceived that the case was desperate. He was an emaciated old man, reduced by a disease of such long continuance, as to leave no prospect of recovery. Medicines, however, were administered, which, though they afforded but a temporary relief, raised a fallacious hope in the breast of the sufferer, who expressed the utmost anxiety to be able to attend on the day appointed for our public reception, at which time the Chinese deputies were likewise to be introduced. They had before been admitted to an informal audience of the king, when the court was at Meengoung, soon after their first arrival, where his majesty met them as though by chance. It is not usual for the king to receive public ministers ceremoniously, except in the metropolis.

As the time approached that was appointed for our public entry into Ummerapoora, which as yet we had only viewed from our residence on the opposite bank of the lake, I judged it proper to make some inquiry respecting the ceremonials usually observed on such occasions, and the exterior forms of homage that would be required. I wished also to ascertain the relative degree of rank that would be granted to the agent of the Governor-general of India; and as I was officially given to understand that the Chinese deputies were to be introduced on the same day, I urged my right to precedence, on the thorough persuasion that they did not constitute an imperial embassy, but were merely a provincial legation, although probably sanctioned by the monarch of China.

The necessity of ascertaining these points became evident, from the scrupulous regard to external forms which the Birmans manifested upon every occasion. The Maywoon of Pegue being the channel of my official communication, I received through him, in reply to my first application, a general assurance of due attention, but an equivocal answer with respect to the Chinese. Repeating the requisition for satisfactory particulars, I was informed that I should be allowed parity of rank with the nobility of the court, and that precedence over the Chinese deputies would be granted to me. With those assurances I remained satisfied.

On the 29th of August, the day preceding that of our formal introduction, I received a message, desiring to know what number of attendants I meant to take with me, and to specify the rank they bore, particularly that of the pundit, the

moonshee, and painter. I was at the same time acquainted, that it was not customary to admit armed men into the palace, a form to which I readily assented. Late in the evening, another message was brought to inform me, that the profession of Dr Buchanan was held by the Birmans in a less dignified estimation than it bore among us ; and that it was unusual, on such solemn occasions, to receive a person of his station into the Lotoo, or great council hall. I took some pains to vindicate the dignity of the liberal and enlightened profession of medicine, and explained to them, that there was no monarch of Europe who did not consider a physician as worthy to hold a place in the most distinguished ranks of society. This difficulty was at length conquered. They agreed to receive the Doctor, but stipulated that he should ride on horseback in the procession, and not be indulged with an elephant—a privilege which, they said, was granted only to persons of the highest consequence.

Preparatory to our visit, the presents intended for his majesty were carefully assorted, and put into separate boxes. They were both handsome and costly, consisting of various kinds of European and Indian articles, such as mirrors, cut-glass, fire-arms, broad-cloths, embroidered muslins, and Indian silks, all of the finest quality that could be procured. Among other things there was a Shanscrit manuscript, superbly illumined, and written with beautiful minuteness. It was a copy of the Bagwaat Geeta, enclosed in a case of gold, and designed as a personal compliment from Sir John Shore, the Governor-general, to his Birman majesty. There was also an electrical ma-

chine, of the effects of which some of the Birman were not ignorant. * The boxes were covered with red satin, and fastened to poles, for the convenience of being carried on men's shoulders. Every matter was arranged on the day before the ceremony was to take place.

On the 30th of August we took an early breakfast, and about eight o'clock a sere-dogee, or secretary of the Lotoo, came to acquaint us that boats were prepared to convey us across the lake. Our domestics had received orders to hold themselves in readiness, dressed in the livery of the embassy, and the guard was paraded without arms. The presents having been sent before, we walked to the water side, attended by Baba-Sheen, the Sere-dogee, and several inferior officers. At the same time the two junior members of the Chinese mission, the senior being now at the point of death, came forth from the gate of their enclosure, attended by a retinue comparatively very small. We found three war-boats at the bank ready to receive us. These boats were sufficiently capacious for the number they were destined to contain. The largest was of fifty oars, but they were not above one-third manned, probably with a view to our accommodation, as the vessels are so narrow that persons unaccustomed to them cannot sit between the rowers without inconvenience. It did not, however, escape our notice that they were quite plain, without either gilding or paint. We were about twenty minutes in rowing to the opposite side of the lake, and found a crowd of people collected near the

* An electrifying machine had been introduced several years ago by a Frenchman.

water's edge to see us land. The place where we landed appeared to be nearly a mile, in a direct line below the fort, the southern walls of which are washed by the lake when the waters are swollen. Three elephants and several horses were waiting to convey us, and some Birman officers of inferior consequence attended at the bank, dressed in their robes and caps of ceremony. The furniture of the animals we were to ride was far from being superb. Men of rank in the Birman empire always guide their own elephants, and sit on the neck, in the same manner that the drivers or mohaats do in India. Owing to this custom, they are unprovided with those commodious seats in which an Indian gentleman reposes at ease on the back of this noble beast, whilst the government of it is intrusted to another person. A large wicker basket, somewhat resembling the body of an open carriage, but smaller, without any elevated seat, and covered with carpets at the bottom, was fastened on the back of the elephant by means of iron chains that passed under his belly, and were prevented from chafing him by tanned oxhides. This equipage was neither comfortable nor elegant; but as I had not learned how to manage an elephant, and ride between his ears, there was no alternative. I was obliged either to take what was provided, or submit to a less dignified conveyance. The drivers, instead of making the beast kneel down to receive his rider, as is the custom in other countries, drove him up to a temporary stage that had been erected for the purpose of mounting. Each of the Chinese deputies was also honoured with an elephant. Mr

Wood and Dr Buchanan rode on handsome spirited horses, of the small Pegue breed, which had been prepared for them, and were equipped with much better furniture than was assigned to the elephants. The Birman saddles, however, not being well calculated for the ease of an European rider, two of English manufacture, which we had brought with us, were substituted in their stead. The moonshee, the pundit, and the painter, were likewise permitted to ride on horseback. After we had adjusted the ceremonial of mounting, the procession was marshalled in the following order :

A Sandohgaan, or master of the ceremonies,
on horseback :

An Oniroupseeree, or register of strangers,
on horseback :

A Letzounsereee, or register of presents,
on horseback,
dressed in their official robes and caps.

Soldiers that composed the escort.

The elephant of the representative of the
Governor-general.

Mr Wood and Dr Buchanan, on horseback.

Baba-Sheen, as chief interpreter.

The Chinese deputies on elephants, preceded by
their servants, bearing flags.

A Woondock, or second counsellor of state.

Two Terrezogees, or officers who hold
judiciary stations.

The servants of the embassy walked on each side, two by two ; and a number of constables attended, with long white rods, to keep off the populace.

The procession being thus arranged, we commenced our march, keeping a moderate pace, so

as not to distress the bearers of the presents. After proceeding a short way, we entered a wide and handsome street that was paved with brick. The houses on each side were low, built of wood, and covered with tiles. They had been evidently prepared for the occasion, being fresh whitewashed, and decorated with boughs and flowers. The shops, which are usually opened towards the street, displayed their best goods. In front of each house was a slight latticed railing of bamboo, advanced into the street, to the distance of three or four feet. Over this space was spread a shade of bamboo mats, that reached from the eaves of the houses to the railing, forming a sort of covered balcony, every one of which was crowded with spectators, men and women indiscriminately. Boys sat on the tops of the houses, and the streets were so thronged as to leave only a sufficient space for the procession to move without interruption. But what rendered the scene most remarkable was, the posture which the multitude preserved. Every person, as soon as we came in sight, squatted on his hams, and continued in that attitude until we had passed by. This was an indication of high respect. Throughout the crowd there was no disturbance, nor any extraordinary noise. The populace looked up and gazed in silence, nor did they attempt to follow us, but were satisfied with a transient view. The Pagwaats, or constables, armed with long rods, sometimes affected to strike those who were most forward, in order to make them recede; but in this act they humanely avoided hurting any one, generally directing the blow to the ground close to those whom they intended to remove. Thus we passed through se-

veral wide streets running in a straight direction, and often crossed by others at right angles. We perceived only two brick houses, and these we were informed belonged to foreigners. Contiguous to the fort was a small street, entirely occupied by the shops of silversmiths, who exhibited their wares in the open balcony, and displayed a great variety of Birman utensils in plate. The distance from the landing-place to this street we computed to be two miles. Immediately after, we crossed the ditch of the fort, which was wide, deep, and faced with brick, but had little water in it. The passage was over a causeway formed on a mound of earth, in which there was a chasm of about ten feet to carry off the rain, and across this a strong bridge of planks was laid. Between the bridge and the foot of the wall, there was a space, eighty or a hundred feet wide, on which two redoubts were raised to defend the passage of the ditch. The rampart, faced by a wall of brick, was about twenty feet high, exclusive of the parapet, which had embrasures for cannon, and apertures for musketry. Small demi-bastions projected at regular distances beyond the wall, but they did not appear to contain sufficient space to admit of heavy ordnance. The body of the rampart was composed of earth, sustained externally and within by strong walls. The gate was massive, with a wicket in it; and the fort altogether, considered as an Eastern fortification, was respectable, but insufficient to resist the approaches of an enemy skilled in war. The Birmans, however, believe it to be impregnable. They put their trust in the height and solidity of their wall, which they conceive to be strong enough to resist all assaults, in-

dependent of the cover of a glacis, or any other advanced work than the ditch. I did not attempt to mortify their pride by telling them a disagreeable truth, that a battery of half a dozen cannon would in a few hours, reduce their walls to a heap of ruins ; and indeed if I had told them so, it is probable they might not have credited the information.

We entered by the western gate. There was little distinction between the houses in the fort and those of the city, except that the dwellings of persons of official consequence, and the members of the royal family, who resided within the walls, were surrounded by a wooden partition that inclosed a court. We passed, making several angles in our way, through a market supplied with rice, pulse, and other vegetables, but saw neither meat nor fish. At the distance of two short streets from the palace, we came to a spot where bamboo stages were erected for us to alight, similar to those at the landing-place. Here we dismounted, and walked in the same order as we had rode. Coming to the top of a short street leading down to the palace, we were desired by the Sandohgaan, or master of the ceremonies, through Baba-Sheen, to stop and make obeisance to the residence of majesty, by a gentle inclination of the body, and raising the hand to the head, as they did ; a desire with which I complied, although I conceived the distance so great as hardly to require that mark of respect. When we had proceeded two or three hundred yards farther, the Sandohgaan repeated the ceremony of bowing, to which I offered no objection ; nor should I have felt the smallest reluctance in complying, had not the man-

ner of the Sandohgaan been what I considered extremely disrespectful. Thus we proceeded, until we came to the rhoom, which was a lofty hall, raised four or five feet from the ground, and open on all sides; it was situated about a hundred yards from the gate of the palace court, on the left hand, and in the centre of a spacious area. Putting off our shoes, we entered the saloon, and sat down on carpets that were spread for us, with our faces towards the palace gate. Here the presents were deposited, whilst the Chinese deputies took their places on the other side.

It was now about ten o'clock, and the woondock intimated that we must wait until all the princes of the royal family arrived, before it would be proper for us to enter. We had sat but a short time, when the prince of Pegahm, the junior of the king's sons in point of rank, though not in years, being born of a different mother, made his appearance. He was mounted on the neck of a very fine elephant, which he guided himself, sitting on a scarlet cloth embroidered with gold, whilst a servant behind, on the back of the animal, screened him from the sun with a gilded parasol. About fifty musketeers led the way. These were followed by a number of halberdiers, carrying spears with gilded shafts, and decorated with gold tassels. Six or eight officers of his household (each of the king's sons have a separate establishment) came next, dressed in velvet robes with embroidered caps, and chains of gold depending from the left shoulder to the right side: these immediately preceded the prince's elephant. Another body of spearmen, with his palanquin of state, closed the procession. On entering the gate, he gave to one

of his attendants a polished iron hook, with which he governed his elephant; as not any thing that can be used as a weapon is suffered to be brought within the precincts of the palace, not even by his majesty's sons. The prince's escort halted without the gate, and the greater number of his attendants were stopped, those only being admitted who were of higher rank, together with the men who carried his large beetle-box of gold, and his flaggon of water, which are brought rather for state than for refreshment. When the prince had alighted, his elephant returned, and all the attendants ranged themselves in the area between the rhoom and the palace gate. Soon after the prince of Pegahm had entered, the prince of Tongho, the next in precedence, appeared. He was attended by a suit nearly similar to that of his brother; and in succession came the princes of Bassein and of Prome: the Engy Teekien, or heir apparent, came last. When he arrived it was twelve o'clock, which the great drum that proclaims the hours sounded from a lofty tower near the palace. The state in which the latter personage made his public entrance was highly superb, and becoming his elevated station. He was preceded by a numerous body guard of infantry, consisting of four or five hundred men, armed with muskets, who marched in regular files, and were uniformly clothed and accoutred. Next came a party of Cassay troopers, habited in their fanciful dress, with high conical caps bending backwards. We were told that, through respect, they had alighted from their horses nearly at the same place where we had dismounted. Twenty or thirty men followed these, holding long gilded wands; then came eighteen or

twenty military officers of rank, with gilded helmets; next, the civil officers of his household and his council, wearing the tzaloe, or chain of nobility, and arrayed in their robes and caps of state, varied according to their respective ranks. The prince, borne on men's shoulders, in a very rich palanquin, but without any canopy, followed. He was screened from the sun by a large gilded fan, supported by a nobleman; and on each side of his palanquin walked six Cassay astrologers, of the Braminical sect, dressed in white gowns and white caps studded with stars of gold. Close behind, his servants carried his water-flaggon, and a gold beetle-box, of a size which appeared to be no inconsiderable load for a man. Several elephants and led horses with rich housings came after. Some inferior officers, and a body of spearmen, with three companies of musketeers, one clothed in blue, another in green, and a third in red, concluded the procession.

In every part of this ostentatious parade, perfect regularity was maintained, which considerably increased the effect. All things seemed to have been carefully predisposed, and properly arranged. If it was less splendid than imperial Delhi, in the days of Mogul magnificence, it was far more decorous than any court of Hindostan at the present day. The rabble was not tumultuous, the attendants and soldiery were silent, and every man seemed to know his own place. No noisy heralds, as is the custom in India, ran before, vociferating titles, and overturning people in their way. The display of this day was solemn and dignified; and I doubt much whether, in any other capital, such multitudes could be brought together with so little

confusion, as, besides the attendants and the military, there were many thousands of spectators.

Our delay in the rhoom had now been protracted to two hours; a circumstance which, though it gratified our curiosity with a novel and most interesting spectacle, yet could not be considered as a mark of respect, especially as we had not the company of any person of distinguished rank, the junior Woondock excepted, who stayed with us but a very short time. The attendance of the Maywoon of Pegue was, according to the usage of the country, on this occasion, our undoubted right; and the example of the viceroy of Bamoo, who paid that compliment to the Chinese deputies, placed the omission in a more striking point of view, whilst the singular character of the people put it out of my power to attribute the neglect to chance, or to casual inadvertency.

A few minutes after the Engy Teekein, or prince royal, had entered, we received a summons, in compliance with which we proceeded from the rhoom, observing the same order as before; the presents carried in front, and the members of the Chinese embassy following the English deputation. As we proceeded, the Sandohgaan was exceedingly troublesome, by calling on us to make frequent superfluous obeisances, whilst his manner of requiring them was conspicuously uncivil. I checked his insolence by observing, through Baba-Sheen, that if he wished me to proceed, he must alter his tone and demeanour. This reproof, however, had only a momentary effect; he soon resumed his arrogant behaviour, which he repeated throughout the day whenever opportunity offered.

On approaching the gate, the greater part of

our attendants were stopped, and not permitted to follow us ; and we were desired to put off our shoes, with which we immediately complied.

The area we now entered was spacious, and contained the Lotoo, or grand hall of consultation and of audience, where the Woongees meet in council, and where affairs of state are discussed and determined. Within this enclosure there is an inner court, separated by a brick wall, which comprehends the palace, and all the buildings annexed to the royal residence. Within the gate a troop of tumblers were performing their feats, while dancing girls were exhibiting their graces in the open air, and on the bare ground, to the sound of no very harmonious music. We were next ushered up a flight of stairs into a very noble saloon, or open hall, called the Lotoo, where the court was assembled in all the pomp that Birman grandeur could display. On entering this hall, a stranger cannot fail to be surprised at the magnificence of its appearance. It is supported by seventy-seven pillars, disposed in eleven rows, each consisting of seven. The space between the pillars I judged to be about twelve feet, except the central row, which was probably two feet wider. The roof of the building is composed of distinct stages, the highest in the centre. The row of pillars that supported the middle, or most lofty roof, we judged to be thirty-five or forty feet in height ; the others gradually diminish as they approach the extremities of the building, and those which sustain the balcony are not more than twelve or fourteen feet. At the farther part of the hall there is a high gilded lattice, extending quite across the building, and in the centre of the lattice is a

gilded door, which, when opened, displays the throne. This door is elevated five or six feet from the floor, so that the throne must be ascended by means of steps at the back, which are not visible, nor is the seat of the throne to be seen, except when the King comes in person to the Lotoo. At the bottom of the lattice there is a gilt balustrade, three or four feet high, in which the umbrellas and several other insignia of state were deposited. The royal colour is white, and the umbrellas were made of silk of that colour, richly bespangled with gold. Within this magnificent saloon were seated, on their inverted legs, all the princes and the principal nobility of the Birman empire, each person in the place appropriated to his particular rank and station. Proximity to the throne is, of course, the most honourable situation ; and this station was occupied by the princes of the blood, the Woongees, the Attawoons, and other great officers of state. The Engy Teekien (or heir apparent) sat on a small stool, about six inches high ; the other princes on fine mats. The space between the central pillars that front the throne, is always left vacant, for this curious reason, that his Majesty's eyes may not be obliged to behold those whom he does not mean to honour with a look. The place allotted for us was next to this unoccupied part, but we afterwards discovered that the Chinese deputies had taken possession of those seats which, according to the etiquette that had been agreed upon, the English gentlemen were to have occupied. So trivial a circumstance would not have merited attention, had it not been followed by circumstances which left no room to suppose, that any act relating to external forms was either acci-

dental or unpremeditated on the part of those who regulated the ceremonials.

After we had taken possession of mats that had been spread for us, it was civilly intimated that we ought not to protrude the soles of our feet towards the seat of majesty, but should endeavour to sit in the posture that was observed by those around us. With this desire we would readily have complied, if it had been in our power, but we had not yet learned to sit upon our own legs. The flexibility of muscles which the Birmans, and indeed all the natives of India, possess, is such as cannot be acquired by Europeans. A Birman, when he sits, seldom touches the seat with his posteriors, but is supported by his heels. It is scarcely practicable for an European, dressed in close garments, to place himself in such an attitude; and if he were able, it would be out of his power to continue long in it. We inverted our legs as much as possible, and the awkwardness with which we did this excited a smile from some; not a word, however, was uttered, and our endeavours, I thought, seemed to give satisfaction. In a few minutes eight Bramins, dressed in white sacerdotal gowns, and silk caps of the same colour, studded with gold, assembled round the foot of the throne, within the balustrade, and recited a long prayer in not unpleasing recitative. This ceremony lasted a quarter of an hour. When they had withdrawn, the letter from the Governor-general, which I delivered to a Woondock, was placed on a silver tray in front of the railing, and a Sandohgaan, or reader, advanced into the vacant space, and made three prostrations, touching the ground each time with his forehead. He then read, or ra-

ther chanted, in a loud voice, what I understood was a Birman translation of the letter. When this was done, the reader repeated his prostrations, and next proclaimed a list of the presents for the king. These several readings being finished, he repeated his obeisances and retired. After an interval of a few minutes, an officer, entitled Nakhaangee, advanced, and proposed a question to me, as if from his majesty. On receiving my answer he withdrew, as it might be supposed to communicate the reply; and returned in an adequate time to ask another. Thus, he put three separate questions to me, which were as follows: "You come from a distant country; how long is it since you arrived? How were the king, queen, and royal family of England, when the last accounts came from thence? Was England at peace or war with other nations? and was your country in a state of disturbance?"

The latter question alone contained more than words of compliment and ceremony, and, coming in such a solemn manner, required a clear and determinate answer on my part. I replied in the Persian language—"That Great Britain was at enmity with France; that the Continent of Europe was the seat of war; but that the kingdom of England enjoyed perfect tranquillity, which it was not probable would be disturbed." This interrogation seemed to indicate, that the Birmans had received impressions of our situation in Europe from no very favourable quarter; and I had afterwards occasion to know, that the unremitting and restless industry of French propagators had pervaded even this remote region; and that though,

in such a country, they dare not avow their equalizing principles, they left no art unpractised, through the means of their emissaries, to insinuate doubts, excite fears, and create distrust of the English.

These were all the questions that were proposed; neither the Chinese nor any other person being interrogated. In a few minutes after my last reply had been conveyed, a very handsome dessert was brought in, and set before us. It consisted of a variety of sweetmeats, as well China as Birman: læpack, or pickled tea-leaf, and beetle, formed part of the entertainment, which was served up in silver, china, and glass-ware. There appeared to be not less than a hundred different small dishes. We tasted of a few, and found some of them very palatable; but none of the courtiers partook, or moved from their places. About half an hour had elapsed, when we were informed by the Sandohgaan that there was no occasion for us to remain any longer. The non-appearance of his majesty was a considerable disappointment, as I had been taught to expect that he would have received the Governor-general's letter in person. It was not, however, until some time afterwards, that I was made acquainted with the true reason of his absence.

When we rose to leave the Lotoo, the Sandohgaan desired us to make three obeisances to the throne, by a slight inclination of the body and raising the right hand to the head. We were then reconducted to the saloon, where we were informed it was necessary we should remain until the princes came forth from the palace, and had got upon their elephants, as their etiquette did not

allow any person, on such occasions, to mount before the members of the royal family ; we accordingly took our places in this hall as before. Shortly afterwards the court broke up with as much form and parade as it had assembled.

The ceremony of departure differed from that of entrance. The Engy Teekien came out first, who went in last ; next followed the other members of the royal family in rotation, and after them came the Chobwaas, or petty tributary princes. These are personages who, before the Birman had extended their conquests over the vast territory they now possess, had held small independent sovereignties, which they were able to maintain so long as the balance of power continued doubtful between the Birman, Peguers, and Siamese ; but the decided success that has attended the Birman arms, since the accession of the present family, having deprived them of their independence, their countries are now reduced to subordinate provinces of the Birman empire. As many of their governors as confidence could be placed in, and who were willing to take the oath of allegiance to their conquerors, were continued in the management of their former possessions, and are obliged to make an annual visit to the capital, to pay homage in person at the golden feet. The moderation, as well as the policy of this measure, is said to have fully answered the ends that were proposed.

As soon as the royal family had departed, we returned to the place where we had left our elephants, and proceeded home ; with this difference, that the Chinese deputies, who had followed us to the palace, preceded us in our return—a circumstance which, in addition to several others, gave

me cause to attribute want of ingenuousness to those who had the management of the ceremonials. My claim of precedence had been unconditionally stipulated and admitted—a precedence, which the certainty that the Chinese deputies constituted only a provincial mission of very inferior consideration, gave me an undoubted title to demand.

With a people less attentive to punctilio, or less regardful of the privileges and external indications of rank, I should certainly not have considered it necessary to controvert matters of no intrinsic moment in themselves, but which, when intended to produce an effect on the minds of those who can only judge from appearances, become, to a person in a public capacity, of real importance. Every occurrence of this day, and every object that presented itself, evinced the previous care that had been bestowed on the minutest points of etiquette. The utmost splendour of the court had been displayed on the occasion; and I was credibly informed, that the non-appearance of his majesty was neither customary when a foreign minister from a sovereign state was to be introduced, nor owing to any accidental prevention; but that it was a matter predetermined, in order to afford a pretext for spreading abroad that the representative of the English nation had delivered his despatches, and rendered tribute (for so they denominated the presents) without being honoured by an interview of their king. These apparent indications of arrogance, which were not diminished by the unworthy artifice of making me believe that his majesty was to have received in person the letter from the Governor-general, as coming from a sovereign and an equal power, gave me reason-

able grounds to be dissatisfied with the manner in which the ceremonials had been conducted, and made me suspect the real light in which it was the wish of the court that I should be considered. As nothing degrading to my public character, however, had yet been avowed, I refrained from any formal declaration of my sentiments till subsequent circumstances confirmed my conjectures, and rendered an explanation unavoidable.

We did not arrive at our dwelling in the grove, till past three o'clock. In our way home, the spectators were few, in comparison with the numbers collected to gaze at us when we went. The day had been oppressively hot; we were nevertheless highly gratified by the scene we had beheld, which was uncommonly splendid, and in every respect suited to the dignity of an imperial court. The evening, however, proved cool; and refreshing breezes recompensed us for the sultriness of the day, the transactions of which supplied an interesting topic of conversation until the hour of repose.

CHAPTER VI.

PRESENTS EXPECTED BY THE PRINCIPAL OFFICERS—OF TRIVIAL VALUE—MATTER OF FORM—VISIT THE ENGY TEEKIEN—CONDUCT OF THE PUBLIC OFFICERS MORE RESPECTFUL—SPLENDOUR OF THE COURT—ENGY TEEKIEN—CEREMONY AT DEPARTING—CHOBWAS, OR TRIBUTARY PRINCES—MEEDAW PRAW—A PRINCESS OF HIGH DIGNITY—HER COURT—VENERABLE PERSON—CURIOSITY—POLITENESS—VISIT TO THE PRINCES OF PROME—OF BASSIEN—OF TONGHO—AND OF PEGAHM—RECEPTION AT THEIR RESPECTIVE COURTS—VIEW THE PIEDIGAUT TIEK, OR ROYAL LIBRARY—NOISES RENEWED BY THE CHINESE—EFFECTS OF DESPOTISM—PRIDE OF THE MINISTERS—INSURMOUNTABLE DIFFICULTY IN A POINT OF ETIQUETTE—POLITENESS OF THE GOVERNOR OF BAMOO—VISIT TO THE SEREDAW POUNDAGEE PRAW, OR ARCH PRIEST—MAGNIFICENT KIOUM—NUMEROUS RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS—KNEBANG KIOUM—A BEAUTIFUL BUILDING—TO WHAT PURPOSE APPLIED—A KIOUM OF EXTRAORDINARY SPLENDOUR—VISIT THE ARRACAN GAUDMA—ENTHUSIASTIC ADORATION OF THE MULTITUDE—CHOUNDA, OR PLACE OF ACCOMMODATION FOR STRANGERS—PARTAKE OF REFRESHMENT—RETURN—DESCRIPTION OF THE FORT OF UMMERAPOORA.

THE next morning, August 31st, the Shawbunder of Rangoon, and Baba-Sheen, waited on us with information, that, as our formal introduction was now past, I might command elephants and horses to go wheresoever I pleased ; and that they had received an order to attend, and to show me whatever was most worthy the notice of a stranger. They intimated also, that the Engy Teekien, or heir-apparent, was to hold a court on the following day, for the purpose of our introduction, and that our attendance would be expected about the hour of noon. These instructions they had received from the Maywoon of Pegue ; to whom I wrote in reply, that as the stipulated formalities, which had been agreed to by all parties, had been infringed on the preceding day, it became necessary, before I could accept of the prince's invitation, to receive a positive assurance that they would be better observed on this occasion. I likewise represented the conduct of the Sandohgaan as obviously disrespectful, and hoped that he would not be allowed to officiate again on our introduction ; but, above all, I desired to be explicitly informed, whether or not the Engy Teekien purposed to appear in person, without which I could not possibly think of attending his court.

To this letter I received a civil reply, in the Persian language, assuring me that some part of what to me seemed objectionable, originated in mistake ; that the Sandohgaan should be confined for his improper conduct ; and that the prince intended to receive me in person. These assurances, coming from such a quarter, were perfectly satisfactory.

Since my arrival, I had been apprised of a cir-

cumstance, of which I was before unaware, that it was customary for a person in a public capacity to present something of the manufacture of his country, or some rarity, to each member of the royal family to whom he is introduced. It was likewise usual, though not indispensably necessary, to pay the same compliment to the chief ministers and the principal officers of the court. This present, being no more than a piece or two of muslin, or silk, was too trifling to be regarded by the individuals for its value. It was, nevertheless, expected, and the omission would be considered as unhandsome. In addition, therefore, to the things that I had brought with me, I gave directions to purchase such articles, of European and Indian manufacture, as were most esteemed, and could be procured. These I allotted agreeably to the instructions of Baba-Sheen and the Shawbunder, who were so good as to acquaint me with the established forms, and the proportion to be presented to each person.

At nine o'clock on the first of September, we crossed the river, nearly with the same attendance as on the former day. In consequence of an application I had made to the Maywoon of Pegue, elephants were now provided for Mr Wood and Dr Buchanan. This was a circumstance which neither the gentlemen themselves nor I should have deemed of sufficient importance to deserve any attention, had not the junior members of the Chinese embassy been supplied with them; but as these people paid such strict attention to the minutest article expressive of relative rank, I did not think it right that the gentlemen with me should be considered in a degree inferior to the

subordinate members of a provincial delegation, of which an acquiescence, in a less dignified mode of conveyance than the Chinese were allowed, would, on my part, have been a tacit admission.

We proceeded through the city by the route we pursued before, with the presents carried in front, and observing the same order of procession. Many of the houses were decorated with flower-pots and garlands, but the spectators were by no means so numerous as when we made our first entrance. We dismounted at the top of a street, within a few hundred yards of the surrounding wall of the prince's palace, where stages had been erected for our convenience. From thence we were conducted to the Rhoom, which was situated a little to the right hand of the principal gate. There was another building of a similar kind opposite to us, which we were informed was used only for trials, and the transaction of public business; but the one that we occupied was appropriated to ceremony and state. In the formalities of this day, a much more respectful demeanour was preserved towards us, than on the former occasion, and we sat in the Rhoom with better company. Two Woondocks, the master of the elephants, and some other officers bearing emblems of rank, attended us; another Sandohgaan also officiated in the ceremonies, and behaved very differently from the person whose manners had been so offensive, and whom I did not observe at court on this day. This conduct fully compensated for the former incivility, though perhaps the Sandohgaan did not receive any severe reprehension for what he had done.

The king of the Birmans, who seems to have a

parental fondness for all his children, is said to be particularly attached to the Engy Teekien, or eldest prince ; and, with a liberal policy, has granted him a share in the government almost equal to what he himself exercises. The establishment of the heir-apparent is becoming his high station and future expectations ; and his Woon, or chief minister, stands among the foremost of the Birman nobles in reputation for wisdom and integrity.

There was little in the etiquette of this day different from that of the visit to his Majesty. We waited in the Rhoom until all the younger princes had arrived, which they did, as before, in rotation, beginning with the junior. The members of the royal family went within the gate, before they alighted from their elephants and palanquins ; but the ministers and the nobility dismounted on the outside, and proceeded on foot. After each person had entered, the gate was immediately closed, and opened as soon as another visitant presented himself. When we advanced to the gate, we expected it would have been instantly thrown open to admit us. A delay, however, occurred, which at first I was inclined to attribute to some accidental circumstance ; but after I had waited some minutes under a burning sun, finding that there was an unnecessary and apparently a studied protraction, I turned round and walked towards the Rhoom. On this the door was immediately opened, and the interior court, on the right hand of the gate, as we entered, displayed several men dancing in masquerade ; and on the left was a band of musicians, and a set of dancing girls without masks. A little farther on, were two handsome houses ; one of masonry, with doors and windows closely

resembling Gothic structure, flat roofed, and of a peculiar, but far from inelegant, construction; the other was of wood. We were conducted to the latter, and ascended into a capacious saloon, open on three sides. Here we found the court assembled, nearly in the same manner as at the Lotoo. The hall consisted of six rows of pillars, seven in each row; but there was neither gilding nor paint bestowed upon them, such ornaments being strictly confined to the sovereign and the priesthood. The naked pillars gave a very rude appearance to the apartment, which was disadvantageously contrasted with the brilliant dresses of the courtiers. We occupied the same relative position to the rest of the assembly as at the Lotoo, with this difference, that the gentlemen of the English mission had the place assigned to them which the Chinese deputies, either through mistake or design, possessed on the former day. At one end of the saloon, against a wainscot, stood the prince's sofa of state, covered with embroidered cloth, and on each side were ranged several utensils of gold of a very large size; such as his beetle-box, cup, spitting-pot, and water-flaggon. Above the sofa there was a window in the wainscot, six or eight feet from the ground, with folding shutters, that were closed when we entered the hall. Soon after we had taken our seats, four Bramins, dressed in white sacerdotal garments, chanted a prayer that lasted a quarter of an hour. Their devotions being finished, the window before mentioned suddenly opened, and discovered the Engy Teekien seated behind it. The courtiers immediately bent their bodies, and sat in a crouching attitude, with their hands joined. The English gentlemen joined their

hands like the rest of the company. The prince seemed to be about twenty-eight or thirty years of age, of an open countenance, and rather inclined to corpulency; but of his person we could not judge, as his head and shoulders only were visible. His habit, as much as could be seen of it, shone with gold, and he wore on his head a pyramidical cap, that glistened exceedingly; but of its real richness we could not form any estimate, being at too great a distance. A list of the presents were then recited in a loud voice by a reader kneeling in front of the sofa; after which, total silence prevailed throughout the assembly. Not a word was spoken by the prince. He noticed no one, but sat erect and motionless, without appearing to look either to the right or the left. About a quarter of an hour elapsed in this dumb interview, when on a sudden, by some agency invisible to us, the window-shutters were closed, and we saw him no more.

A very handsome dessert was then served up, on dishes spread on gilded trays. We tasted of several things, and, when the repast was ended, returned to the Rhoom, in which we remained until the royal family passed by. As much form was observed this day, as when the court assembled at the Lotoo; and the demonstrations of respect manifested towards the Engy Teekien, as well by his brothers as by inferior subjects, fell little short of what is offered to the sovereign himself—a circumstance that strikingly evinces the wisdom and policy of the government. The Chobwas, or petty princes, who followed the royal family, were on this day very numerous. We were told, that there were altogether fifty-six Chobwas dependent on

the Birman state. If this be true, their territories must be very inconsiderable. On the present occasion the governor of Bamoo walked amongst them in procession, from which we concluded that he was a temporary regent; a station to which the king occasionally appoints Birman officers, when the hereditary prince of the country happens to be a minor, or incapable of the administration of public affairs.

The mother of the principal queen, named Meedaw Praw, has already been mentioned as a princess of high dignity, venerable for her years, and illustrious from the affinity that she bears to the royal family. Her sister had been the wife of the famous Alompra, the deliverer of his country; and, her daughter being espoused to the reigning monarch, she stands in the double relation of aunt and mother-in-law to the king. I had been apprised, that a visit to this lady would be an acceptable mark of respect to his majesty; and as the rank she bore gave her precedence over all the sons of the king, except the heir-apparent, it was proper that I should wait upon her before I paid my respects to the junior princes. I gladly embraced the opportunity which this offer gave me, to attend the drawing-room of an Asiatic princess, and promised myself much gratification from a sight so uncommon among the jealous nations of the East. When the ceremony at the palace of the Engy Teekien had ended, it was not more than two o'clock, and there was yet sufficient time to wait upon the Meedaw Praw, who, we were informed, had made preparations to receive us. Mounting our elephants, we went in form to attend her, and

found her possessed of a very handsome mansion in the neighbourhood of the imperial palace. It was situated in the centre of a court, surrounded by a palisade, at the gate of which there was a stage erected for our convenience in alighting. We entered the enclosure without any of the parade observed in our former visits. At the bottom of the stairs we put off our shoes, and ascended into a handsome hall, supported by several lofty pillars. At the farther end a portion of the floor was elevated six or eight inches, and separated by a neat balustrade from the rest of the room. Within this space, under a white canopy, was placed a large cushion of blue velvet fringed with gold, on a carpet covered with muslin. There was a numerous assemblage of both sexes, but particularly women, sitting round the balustrade. As soon as we entered, a space was immediately vacated for us to occupy, in front of the door and opposite to the cushion. After we had been seated a few minutes, the old lady came forth from an inner apartment, and walked slowly towards the elevated seat, supported by two female servants, whilst another held up her train. Her long white hair hung loose upon her shoulders, but she wore neither covering nor ornament upon her head. Her dress, which was extremely fine, without being gaudy, became her advanced years and high dignity. It consisted of a long robe of white muslin, and over her shoulders was thrown a sash of gauze, embroidered with sprigs of gold. She advanced to where the cushion was placed, and took her seat on the carpet, supporting her head on her arm that rested on the pillow, whilst the two female attendants, neatly dressed, kneeling, one on each side, fanned her with

long gilded fans. Every person seemed to pay her profound respect, and when she entered, both men and women bent their bodies in the attitude of submission. I had brought, as a token of my veneration, a string of pearl and some fine muslin. The Sandohgaan announced the offering, and enumerated the articles with a loud voice, entreating, in my name, her gracious acceptance of them. She looked at the English gentlemen with earnestness, but seemed entirely to disregard the Chinese, although their dress was much more showy than ours. Her manner was on this occasion extremely complaisant, and she asked several questions, such as, what were our names? how we were in health? what were our ages? On being informed, she obligingly said she would pray that we might attain as great a longevity as herself; adding, that she had reached her seventy-second year. I did not perceive, amongst the numerous company that attended, any of the junior princes, or of the principal ministers, although there were several personages of distinction. After she had retired, a very handsome dessert was served up. The fruits and preserves were delicious. Whatever China could yield, was united with the produce of their own country. Having tasted of various dishes, we withdrew without any ceremony; and as none of the royal family were present, there was no necessity to delay our departure. We accordingly returned home, a good deal oppressed by the heat of the weather, and wearied by the repetition of tedious formalities.

On the two following days we visited the Princes of Prome, of Bassien, of Tongho, and of Pegahm, titles taken from the provinces over which they

respectively preside. These brothers are not all by the same mother. The Prince of Prome alone being full brother to the Engy Teekien, or heir-apparent. In the course of our visits we had a better opportunity than before of viewing the streets and buildings, the former of which were invariably laid out in straight lines, crossing each other at right angles. The houses in general differed little from those of Rangoon. They were all covered with tiles, and on the ridge of the roofs was a long range of earthen pots, filled with water, in readiness to be broken in case of fire. The few houses of brick and mortar which we saw were said to belong to the members of the royal family. Rows of trees were planted in several streets, five or six feet in front of the houses, forming a shady walk for foot passengers. As the younger princes do not assume the state of royalty, our reception was much more gay and less ceremonious at their palaces, than at that of the Engy Teekien. At the palace of the Prince of Prome, or, as he is termed, the Pee Teekien, the preparations made for our entertainment were extremely splendid. When the gate of the enclosure was thrown open to admit us, we were surprised with a view of a lane of elephants on one side, and of horses on the other: there were fifteen of the former, some of which surpassed in size and beauty any I had ever seen. The horses were more numerous, and several of them very richly caparisoned. Passing through these, we came to an open space, where rope-dancers and tumblers were performing in the open air. We stopped to look at them, but observed nothing remarkable in their feats: they were much inferior in agility to the tumblers of Southern In-

dia. One man, however, surprised us a good deal, by applying the point of a spear to his shoulder, and resting the other end against a pillar, thus pushing on it, apparently with great force, until he bent and broke a thick shaft. This he effected without piercing his own skin, which, though the spear was not very sharp, must have been wonderfully firm to have resisted such evident violence.

While we were viewing the sports, a message was brought from the prince, to acquaint us that these people had been procured for our amusement, and that, after we had satisfied our curiosity, he would be glad to see us. We immediately proceeded to the hall of reception, which was a handsome wooden building, but not so large as that of the elder brother. At the upper end there was a sofa, curiously gilded, and decorated with pieces of mirror, disposed in such a manner as to produce a pleasing effect. None of the royal family were present, and we did not observe any of the Woongees or Attawoons. A few minutes after we had taken our seats, the prince entered, splendidly dressed. He proceeded to his sofa with much solemnity, and spoke only a few words. We were, as usual, entertained with a handsome dessert, of which the prince himself solicited us to eat. As soon as he withdrew, our attention was called to a select company of figure-dancers, who had commenced their performance in the virando, or balcony of the hall. This band of females did not at all discredit the festival of a prince. Three of the number were beautiful, and moved with graceful ease, in perfect harmony to the music. Their outer dress was a flowing robe made of transparent gauze

delicately embroidered with flowers of gold and silver, and a profusion of gold chains encircled their necks and arms. We remained a quarter of an hour beholding this elegant spectacle, and then returned to the place where our elephants were waiting. The Prince of Prome is in person rather above the middle size. His age does not exceed twenty-seven or twenty-eight years; and, like his elder brother, his appearance promises future corpulency. His countenance is naturally cheerful and pleasing, which we were told was the true index of his mind. He bears an excellent character, and is said to be much esteemed in the province over which he immediately presides.

Our next visit was to the Prince of Tongho, by whom we were received with every mark of attention. His dwelling was much inferior to those of his elder brothers, and the attendance was comparatively small. There were, however, a number of state elephants paraded in the court-yard, and we passed through a line of musketeers, drawn up in single files on each side. This military array had a very singular appearance. Hardly any two were dressed alike, and some of them were without any other clothing, than a fillet that encircled their head, and a cloth rolled round their waist. Through respect, they were all seated on their heels, some with their firelocks shouldered, and others with the butts resting on the ground. Here also we found tumblers, musicians, and dancers; and there were two carriages in waiting, handsomely gilded, with a pair of horses harnessed to each. These vehicles were of a light construction, on four wheels, open at the sides, and covered with a convex canopy. The prince sat on a gild-

ed chair : he was a slender man, and appeared to be older than the Prince of Prome, whom he is said not to resemble in any particular. The power which this prince possesses must be considerable, as his government, formerly the independent kingdom of Tongho, is rich, extensive, and populous ; and the fort of Tongho is, at the present day, deemed the strongest in the empire. Persons of rank, we observed, were here permitted to introduce their beetle-boxes and spitting-pots, which was not the case at any of the other courts. Our visit being concluded, we returned home. The heat during the early part of this day had been very intense ; but a refreshing shower towards evening cooled the air, and rendered the night pleasant. We were not surprised, when we came back, to learn that the senior of the Chinese embassy had died during our absence, as he had been so ill in the morning that his colleagues declined taking a share in the ceremonials of the day.

On the following day, at the customary hour, we crossed the lake, and proceeded with the same attendants as before to the house of the Prince of Bassien. His dwelling was very handsome, and the pillars of his hall, which the law prohibits him either to gild or paint, were covered with flowered satin. Many men of rank graced the assembly, and some who wore high military insignia ; but none of the royal family or the principal ministers were present. The prince seemed a very awkward, bashful youth, about seventeen years of age. The situation of his government, which extends along the sea-coast as far south as Cape Negrais, gives him the power either to obstruct or assist, in a material degree, the merchants who trade to Bas-

sien and ships being sometimes obliged to take shelter in the Negrais river, during the adverse monsoon, his people have frequent opportunities of affording aid to the distressed. After sitting some minutes, and finding he was not inclined to begin a discourse, I broke through the general silence, by addressing him in a complimentary manner, expressing acknowledgment of the kindness which had been extended by the officers of his government to British merchants and mariners, as well as my reliance on his future influence in their favour. I spoke in the language of Hindostan, and each sentence was translated by Baba-Sheen. The prince was embarrassed. He twice attempted to reply, but had not the power. Two of his courtiers crept towards him, and, in a prostrate attitude near the foot of his seat, suggested what they conceived he ought to say. Their aid, however, was ineffectual. His highness could not utter a connected sentence. At length his Woon, or chief minister, relieved him, by making an apposite reply in his name. Our entertainment was nearly the same as at the houses of the other princes. From hence we went to the palace of the junior prince, entitled Pegahm Teekien; a title derived from the ancient city of that name, which is the seat of his government. He seemed livelier than his brother whom we had just left, and his Woom was a very venerable personage. On this occasion, the repast differed in one particular from any we had yet received. A roast fowl was introduced, no doubt in compliment to us; and as their religion does not forbid them to eat meat, but only prohibits the slaughter of animals for the purposes of food, there was no crime in the act of serving it up to us, or

partaking of it themselves. The only question was, how the bird came to be deprived of life? to which, no doubt, an exculpatory answer could have been given. This, however, was a matter which it did not become us to discuss; it was certainly a handsome and liberal testimony of their desire to provide what they thought would be agreeable to their guests.

In addition to the band of dancing girls that performed here for our amusement, there were two comedians, who recited passages, and exhibited various distortions of countenance; but they were far inferior to the inimitable performer we had seen at Pegue.

Having finished our introductory visits to the different members of the royal family, we had now leisure to gratify curiosity, by viewing whatever the capital contained, that was most deserving the notice of strangers. The day not being far advanced, we walked from the palace of the prince of Pegahm, to see the Piedigaut Tick, or royal library. It is situated at the north-west angle of the fort, in the centre of a court paved with broad flags, and close to a very handsome Kioum, or monastery. Before we entered the library we ascended the Kioum, and found the inside correspond with the external appearance. The building was spacious and richly gilded. The pillars, the ceiling and the pannels, were entirely covered with gold leaf; and the image of Gaudma shone with brilliant lustre. A balustrade of wood, minutely and beautifully carved, protected the image from intruders. On the pannels of the walls were represented figures of inferior agents of the divinity, and of prostrate Rhahaans in the act of

devotion. These were all shaped in fret-work in the wood, and were of no contemptible workmanship. A well wrought foliage of the same bordered the pannels. The image of Gaudma, in this Kioum, was large, and made of marble. It was seated on a broad pedestal, entirely gilded, in front of which, within the balustrade, stood a handsome girandole of cut-glass, of European manufacture. Near the image, was a gilded couch, which we were informed, was the customary bed of the principal Rhahaan, or head of all the Birman priesthood, when he chose to pass the night in the fort, which rarely happened. It was splendidly gilt; the bottom, however, was only a bare board. Pillows were not wanting, for there were two; but they were made of wood. A mat spread on the floor is the highest luxury of repose in which the Rhahaans indulge.

From the Kioum we proceeded to visit the adjacent library. It is a large brick building, raised on a terrace, and covered by a roof of very compound structure. It consists of one square room, with an enclosed virando, or gallery, surrounding it. This room was locked; and as we had not brought a special order for seeing it, the person who had the care of the library said that he was not at liberty to open the doors, but assured us that there was nothing in the inside different from what we might see in the virando, where a number of large chests, curiously ornamented with gilding and japan, were ranged in regular order, against the wall. I counted fifty, but there were many more, probably not less than a hundred. The books were regularly classed, and the contents of each chest were written in gold letters on the

lid. The librarian opened two, and showed me some very beautiful writing on thin leaves of ivory, the margins of which were ornamented with flowers of gold, neatly executed. I saw also some books written in the ancient Palli, the religious text. Every thing seemed to be arranged with perfect regularity, and I was informed that there were books upon divers subjects—more on divinity than on any other. But history, music, medicine, painting, and romance, had their separate treatises. The volumes were disposed under distinct heads, regularly numbered; and if all the other chests were as well filled as those that were submitted to our inspection, it is not improbable that his Birman majesty may possess a more numerous library than any potentate from the banks of the Danube to the borders of China.

It was late when we returned home, and our repose was disturbed by a renewal of the noises which the Chinese were accustomed to make. They sounded all night, on loud gongs, the funeral knell of the departed ambassador, uttering at intervals horrible cries and lamentations. One of the mourners imitated with his voice the howling of a dog so naturally, that all the curs belonging to the boat-people, and the Cassay huts in our neighbourhood, joined in the chorus. Our proximity to these personages proved to us a source of great molestation.

About this time a ludicrous circumstance happened, which only deserves notice, as it tends to illustrate the character of the people, and shows to what an abject state despotic tyranny can debase the human mind. The Engy Teekein, or prince royal, took a pleasure in collecting foreign beasts.

Among others, he had procured male goats from almost every country of the East. A flock of these, consisting of more than thirty, were sent to feed on the borders of the lake, near our dwelling. We happened to have three or four she-goats, that had been brought from Bengal for the sake of their milk. Allured by the bleat of the females, the whole flock of males one night broke through the paling, and made a forcible irruption into our court. The suddenness of the attack, at such an hour, surprised us not a little. I got up, and ordered the Birman guards that were posted at the gates to drive them away, which they attempted to do by shouting at them, but without any effect, as the animals, some of which were very large, had now become furious, and after fighting with each other, began to rush through our houses. I then desired the Birmans to make use of sticks, but this they positively refused, saying that the goats were "praws," or lords, meaning that they were ennobled by belonging to the prince, and that no person dared, on any account, offer injury to them. Having no other alternative, we armed our servants and the soldiers with large bamboos, who subdued these troublesome invaders, though not without much difficulty, and some risk, whilst the Birmans lifted up their hands and eyes in astonishment at our temerity: the praws, however, were severely beaten. Having at length got rid of them, I returned to rest, and heard no more of the matter.

The intense heat of the three days spent in the formalities of visiting the princes, made me postpone any further ceremonials until the 6th of the month (September), which day was appointed to

pay our respects to Seredaw Poundagee Praw, or the arch priest of the Birman empire. In the intermediate time, a difference of opinion arose in regard to the etiquette of compliments, in which I did not think myself at liberty to depart from what I considered an attention due to my public character.

The grand ruling council of the Birman nation has already been described as consisting of four chief members entitled Woongees, and four junior members, called Woondocks, between whom there is a wide disparity of rank. The place of third Woongee was vacant, and the junior bears very small comparative importance with the two seniors, who, in fact, govern the empire. These personages, whose power is so great, possess a corresponding degree of pride. The governors of provinces are, in their esteem, men of little consequence, and are often treated by these ministers with excessive arrogance, which is not solely confined to those whose situation and expectations place them in a state of dependence, but is indiscriminately extended to all; nor could I hope to be exempted from receiving a share in common with others. I was informed, that after paying my respects to the royal family and the Seredaw, it was expected that I should wait on the two senior Woongees, and offer them in person the customary presents. I observed, in answer, that I had no objection to paying these ministers a mark of attention by the trifling present which usage had established; but to wait on them at their houses, unless I received an assurance that my visit would be returned, was a ceremony I begged leave to

decline. This intimation, I imagine, was rather a disappointment to them, as much pains were taken to induce me to alter my resolution. I however refused to concede, but I offered to meet them at the house of the Maywoon of Pegue; a proposal from which they dissented, remarking, that to visit me would be more eligible than to go to the Maywoon's house. I replied, that our formalities were not less strict than theirs, and that I could no more relinquish my claim to the respect due to my public station, than they could descend from their elevation; and I saw no remedy unless they themselves chose to apply that which was in their own power, and which they must be sensible I had a right to require. Finding that I was not inclined to yield, they requested, if I could not visit them in person, that I would allow the other gentlemen to pay them the compliment; a desire to which I readily acceded, as well from a wish to open a channel of communication, as to manifest on my part a conciliatory disposition. Mr Wood and Dr Buchanan obligingly made no objection. I therefore answered that the gentlemen would wait on them, and expressed my regret that I was deprived of the same pleasure.

During this interval of rest, the governor of Bamoo frequently favoured me with a visit, his business bringing him almost daily to the residence of the Chinese. By his desire, I sent them compliments of condolence, with a piece of coarse white muslin, which, it seems, is the etiquette on such occasions. On one of these days the Bamoo governor brought with him the chart of his journey to Peking, as he had formerly promised; it was delineated in a curious manner on a sort of

black paper commonly used by the Birmans, on which they write with a pencil made of steatite, or soap-stone. The places were distinctly marked; but not having any scale, the measurement was extremely confused, and so disproportionate that it was impossible to judge of distances with any degree of precision. We could, however, trace his progress through the Chinese dominions in the Jesuits map that is prefixed to Du Halde's account of China.

On the day appointed for our visit to the Sere-daw, we took boat at seven in the morning, and, attended by our usual retinue, crossed the lake. One of the surviving Chinese also accompanied us. Baba-Sheen, the Shawbunder of Rangoon, and some Birman officers, met us on the opposite bank, where our elephants were waiting. When we approached the causeway or bridge, instead of crossing it, we turned to the left, and proceeded close to the ditch, parallel with the west face of the fort, till we came to the north-west angle. At this place the river approaches so near to the walls as to render a continuation of the ditch impracticable. We then went along the north side, passing on our left a handsome kioum crowned with a gilded piasath or spire, which we were told had been erected by Meedaw Praw, the venerable lady whom we had visited. On arriving at the north-east corner, we observed at some distance on the plain another religious edifice of distinguished splendour, dignified by the title of Kioumdogee, or royal convent, where, we were informed, the Sere-daw or chief priest intended to receive us, and not at his usual residence, which was at a kioum about two miles farther. The articles I designed to pre-

sent to him having been sent forward to his customary abode, we were obliged to wait in an adjoining house until they could be brought back. Being prepared, we were conducted into a spacious court surrounded by a high brick wall, in the centre of which stood the kioum, an edifice not less extraordinary from the style of its architecture, than magnificent from its ornaments, and from the gold that was profusely bestowed on every part. It was composed entirely of wood, and the roofs, rising one above another in five distinct stories, diminished in size as they advanced in height, each roof being surrounded by a cornice curiously carved and richly gilded. The body of the building, elevated twelve feet from the ground, was supported on large timbers driven into the earth after the manner of piles, of which there were probably 150 to sustain the immense weight of the superstructure. On ascending the stairs, we were not less pleased than surprised at the splendid appearance which the inside displayed. A gilded balustrade, fantastically carved into various shapes and figures, encompassed the outside of the platform. Within this there was a wide gallery that comprehended the entire circuit of the building, in which many devotees were stretched prostrate on the floor. An inner railing opened into a noble hall, supported by colonnades of lofty pillars; the centre row was at least fifty feet high, and gilded from the summit to within four feet of the base, which was lackered red. In the middle of the hall there was a gilded partition of open latticed work, fifteen or twenty feet high, which divided it into two parts, from north to south. The space between the pillars varied from twelve to sixteen

feet, and the number, including those that supported the galleries, appeared to be not fewer than one hundred, which, as they approached the extremities, diminished in height; the outermost row not exceeding fifteen feet. The bottom of these was cased with sheet lead, as a defence against the weather. A marble image of Gaudma, gilded, and sitting on a golden throne, was placed in the centre of the partition; and in front of the idol, leaning against one of the pillars, we beheld the Seredaw sitting on a satin carpet. He was encompassed by a circle of Rhahaans, from whom he could be no otherwise distinguished, than by his preserving an erect position; whilst the others bent their bodies in an attitude of respect, with their hands joined in a supplicating manner. On entering the hall, the Birmans and the Chinese who accompanied us prostrated themselves before the figure of Gaudma, after which they kneeled down, and made their reverence to the Seredaw, touching the ground with their foreheads, whilst we took our seats on fine mats that were spread at a little distance from him. He received us with much politeness, and in his looks and demeanour affected more liveliness and complaisance than any of the fraternity I had hitherto seen. His appearance denoted him to be about forty years of age; not meagre and austere as they generally are, but fat and jocular. I presented to him my offering, which consisted of a piece of yellow cloth, the sacerdotal colour; some sandal wood, and a few wax-candles covered with gold leaf. He asked several questions respecting England, such as how long the voyage usually was from thence to India. Being

told this, he observed, that we were an extraordinary people to wander so far from home. I noticed the magnificence of the kioum : he replied, that such sublunary matters did not attract his attention ; he was on earth but as a hermit. I desired his prayers ; he said they were daily offered up for the happiness of all mankind, but that he would recommend us to the particular protection of Gaudma. He made some observations on our appearance, which I did not understand, and he even smiled ; a relaxation very unusual in a Rhahaan. We retired without ceremony, and, mounting our elephants, proceeded along a wide road leading to the northward, which soon brought us to an extensive plain, that seemed to stretch in an uninterrupted level to the foot of a range of mountains ten or twelve miles distant. The soil was a poor clay, and the pasturage indifferent. We saw at a distance some fields of grain, and understood that capacious reservoirs had been constructed with great labour and expense, by order of the king, in the vicinity of the mountains, which enabled the inhabitants of the low countries to water the grounds, and render the earth productive in a season of drought. Several kioums and villages were scattered over the plain ; but when we had advanced about two miles, religious edifices increased, beyond our power to calculate the number. The first that we entered was called Knebang Kioum, or the Kioum of Immortality, from the centre of which rose a royal piasath, to the height of a hundred and fifty feet ; the roofs were of the customary complicated structure, one above another. This was the place where the embalmed bodies of deceased Seredaws are laid in state. The

building rested on a terrace of brick, and was not elevated on pillars, as kioums and dwelling-houses usually are. The hall was very handsome, about seventy feet square, surrounded by a wide gallery. The roof was sustained by thirty-six gilded pillars, the central forty feet in height. Mats were spread in different parts for the repose of the Rhahaans, and on each was placed a hard pillow. There was also a tray containing books on the duties of Rhahaans, on religion, and the forms of religious worship.

Having rested here for a short time, we next visited the kioum, which was the ordinary residence of the Seredaw. This building far exceeded, in size and splendour, any that we had before seen, and is perhaps the most magnificent of its kind in the universe. It is constructed entirely of wood, and resembles, in the style of its structure and ornaments, that in which we had an interview with the Seredaw, but was much more spacious and lofty. The numerous rows of pillars, some of them sixty feet high, all of which were covered with burnished gilding, had a wonderfully splendid effect. It would be difficult to convey, either in language or by pencil, an adequate description of this extraordinary edifice. The profuse expenditure of gilding on parts exposed to the weather, as well as in the inside, cannot fail to impress a stranger with astonishment at the richness of the decoration, although he may not approve of the taste with which it is disposed. I could not have formed in my imagination a display more strikingly magnificent. This kioum was also divided by a partition, which separated it in the middle from north to south. There was a small room on one

side, made of gilded boards, which we were told was the bedchamber of the Seredaw. Mats were spread on the outside for the attendant Rhahaans. The figure of Gaudma was made of copper, and an European girandole of cut-glass stood before his throne.

Leaving this building, we passed through many courts crowded with smaller temples and kioums. Several gigantic images of Rakuss, the Hindoo demon, half beast half human, made of brass, were showed to us, as composing a part of the spoils of Arracan. From these we were conducted to a magnificent temple which is erecting for the image of Gaudma, that was brought from the same country. The idol is made of polished brass, about ten feet high, and sitting in the usual posture, on a pedestal within an arched recess. The walls are gilded, and adorned with bits of different coloured mirrors, disposed with much taste. Peculiar sanctity is ascribed to this image; and devotees resort from every part of the empire, to adore the Arracan Gaudma, which is not exposed at all hours to the view of the vulgar. The doors of the recess are only opened when persons of particular consequence come to visit it, or at stated times, to indulge the populace. As we approached, a crowd of people thronged after us with tumultuous enthusiasm, striving for admittance to offer up a prayer to this brazen representative of the divinity. We soon turned from these wretched fanatics, and the object of their stupid adoration, to view the noble piasath, or royal spire, that crowned the building, and attracted much more of our attention and respect, than an image, from which even the statuary could claim no praise. The spire rose in

seven separate stages above the roof of the kioum ; and the gold leaf, which had recently been applied, glistening in the sun-beams, reflected a brilliant lustre. This temple, with its auxiliary buildings, which are yet in an unfinished state, will, when completed, be the most elegant in the empire, though perhaps not so spacious as that which is the present residence of the Seredaw. From hence we were conducted to what is called the Chounda, or place for the reception and repose of strangers who come from a distance to offer up their devotions. It communicates on the north side with the great temple, and is also a very beautiful specimen of Birman architecture. It comprehends five long galleries, separated by colonnades, each consisting of thirty-four pillars, or two hundred and four altogether. The two central rows were about twenty-five feet high, but the external ones do not exceed fourteen. They were painted of a deep crimson ground, enlivened by festoons of gold leaf encircling them in a very fanciful and pleasing manner, and in a style much more conformable to European taste than an unvaried surface of gold. The ceiling likewise was embellished with a profusion of carved work, executed with great labour and minuteness. Measuring by our steps, we judged the length to be five hundred and seventy-six feet, and the breadth of each distinct gallery about twelve—the central rather wider than those on either side. A low railing extended along the outer pillars, to prevent improper persons and dogs from defiling the place. It is built upon a terrace of brick, elevated three feet from the ground ; and the floor is made of Chunam, or fine stucco, composed of lime, pounded steatites and oil, the co-

hesion of which forms a hard and smooth surface, that shines like marble *. Our conductor informs us, that this edifice had been lately erected at the sole expense of the senior Woongee. It certainly reflects credit on the projector, and is an ornament to the country.

The heat of the day, which had now attained its greatest force, and our having been in constant exercise from seven in the morning till two o'clock in the afternoon, rendered a place of repose extremely acceptable; and here we not only rested ourselves, but likewise found a plentiful collation prepared for us. Our conductors, aware that the attention of strangers could not fail to be engaged for some hours by such a multitude of new and striking objects, thought it would be more prudent for us to wait under the shade of this hospitable roof till the afternoon, than expose ourselves unnecessarily to a burning sun. We had brought with us, at the instance of our friends, wine, bread and butter, and cold fowl, to which the Shawbunder had added a tureen of excellent vermicelli soup, and a tolerable good pillaw. We sat down to our repast about two o'clock, and after it was finished, continued to recline upon our mats until evening, fanned by a cool and refreshing breeze from the west, whilst we conversed, and contemplated the scene around. The crowd of people, whom the novelty of our appearance had collected, were neither intrusive nor troublesome. On such an occasion, in most other countries of the East, it is probable that, from the prejudices of

* The reader may see a particular account of the Chunanam and its properties in Dr Anderson's "Recreations in Agriculture," &c.

bigotry, we should not have been suffered to depart without receiving some insult, or remarking some indication of contempt; but here, notwithstanding we entered their most sanctified recesses, we were every where treated with uniform civility. The presence of those who accompanied us had doubtless some influence in commanding the awe of the multitude; and if their respect was owing to this motive, it speaks highly for the state of their police; but I am inclined also to give them credit for a disposition naturally kind and benevolent.

In the afternoon we returned home by the same road that we came; and our attention being less engaged than in the morning, we had a better opportunity to judge of the form and extent of the fortress, as we passed along the north side, from one end to the other.

The fort of Ummerapoorra is an exact square. There are four principal gates, one in the centre of each face. There is also a smaller gate on each side of the great gate, equidistant between it and the angle of the fort, comprising twelve gates in all. At each angle of the fort there is a large quadrangular bastion, that projects considerably. There are also eleven smaller bastions on each side, including those that are over the gateways. Between each of these bastions is extended a curtain, about two hundred yards long. From this calculation, a side of the fort occupies two thousand four hundred yards; the Birmans, however, called it four thousand nine hundred royal cubits, which I conceive to be an exaggerated account. Every bastion and gateway is covered by a tyled

roof, supported on four pillars of wood, to prevent injury from the lodgment of rain.

At each corner of the fort there is a gilded temple, nearly one hundred feet in height, but so insignificant, comparatively, with those we had just seen, as not to attract particular notice.

We could perceive, from our elephants, the roof of a range of buildings in the inside, parallel to the walls, and extending along one entire side of the fort, which our conductors said was the public granary and store-rooms.

We arrived at our grove half an hour after dark, wearied by the heat of the weather and the exercise of the day, but gratified to the highest degree with the multiplicity and extraordinary splendour of the objects we had seen. Much as we had heard of the magnificence of their religious buildings, our expectations had been more than fulfilled. The unbounded expenditure of gilding which they bestow on the outside of the roofs, as well as within, must exhaust immense sums. I was informed that the gold leaf is exceedingly pure, and bears exposure to the air for a long time, without suffering injury. The size or glue used to make it adhere, is called Seesee; it is the juice of the croton sebiferum, after undergoing a certain preparation. This is the only manner in which a people, naturally frugal and disinclined to luxury, seem to apply their superfluous wealth. It is to be lamented, that their edifices are in general composed of such a perishable material as wood, which, though of the most durable kind perhaps in the world, cannot last for many generations, or leave to posterity a monumental proof of the taste and magnificence of the national architecture.

CHAPTER VII.

REASON TO HOPE FOR A PROSPEROUS TERMINATION OF THE EMBASSY—MEET WITH STRENUOUS OPPOSITION—ON WHAT GROUNDS—VESSEL ARRIVES AT RANGOON FROM MAURITIUS—NEWS FROM EUROPE UNPLEASANT—INDUSTRIOUSLY PROPAGATED—MR WOOD VISITS THE WOONGEES—POLITE RECEPTION—REMARKABLE CIRCUMSTANCE—REQUIRE TO KNOW HIS MAJESTY'S PLEASURE—DAY APPOINTED FOR THE DELIVERY OF PRESENTS FROM THE BIRMAN KING—CONVERSATION AT THE LOTOO—ARROGANCE OF THE BIRMAN COURT—RESOLVE TO REMONSTRATE—UNCIVIL TREATMENT—MR WOOD PRESENTS A WRITTEN AND SOLEMN DECLARATION—FERMENT CAUSED BY IT—FAVOURABLE CONCLUSION—A DAY APPOINTED FOR OUR RECEPTION BY THE KING—LIBERAL RETURN OF PRESENTS—DIFFERENT ARTICLES—PROCEED TO THE PALACE—INTRODUCTION—HALL OF AUDIENCE—THE KING—HIS DRESS—PERSON—MANNER—RECEIVE OFFICIAL PAPERS IN THE RHOOM—FORMALITY IN CONVEYING THE KING'S LETTER—RETURN.

WHILST we were thus passing our time in amusement and the indulgence of our curiosity, the

more important interests of the mission were not forgotten. The council, I was informed, had held frequent deliberations on some general propositions, which I had submitted with a view to assist the mercantile interests of the two countries, and place commerce on a liberal and secure basis. I had reason given me to conclude, that my suggestions had met with a favourable reception; and I was likewise informed, by an authority which I conceived to be competent, that it was intended to depute a Birman officer of distinction in an official capacity to Bengal, there to confirm, on the part of his Birman Majesty, the good understanding that was henceforth to subsist between the Court of Ummerapoora, and the Government-General of India. Assurances of this nature, together with the attention paid to our private accommodation, induced me to hope for a favourable termination of the mission with which I was intrusted.

I soon found, however, that the attainment of these objects, which were obviously calculated to be of reciprocal advantage to British India and the Birman empire, was opposed by the indirect artifices of individuals possessing weight, whose interests might eventually be affected by any innovation, and who, on that account, sedulously fomented jealousy and distrust. I likewise learned, that the pride of the court had been early awakened by a representation, that the government of Bengal being provincial, and the Governor-general, from whom I derived my commission, only the subject of a king, it would therefore be derogatory to the Birman monarch to treat on terms of equality with an administration that was subordinate, or to correspond with any person beneath the dig-

nity of a crowned head. It is doubtful, however, whether the Birman court would have manifested its sentiments so unequivocally as to draw from me a formal explanation, had not circumstances subsequently occurred which served to strengthen its arrogance, and gave plausibility to the representations that had been fabricated to mislead.

Matters were in this state, when advice came of the arrival of a small vessel at Rangoon from the Isle of France, under Birman colours, which brought an unfavourable account of the situation of affairs in Europe; exaggerating the disappointment of the Allies on the Continent to a total defeat; and adding, that the Dutch and Spaniards having joined the republicans, the utter ruin of the English was not far distant. An obscure agent, maintained at Rangoon by the French, transmitted this information to a person of some official importance at the Birman capital, who immediately promulgated it with an addition, that a powerful fleet was on its voyage from France to India, and that four French ships of war were triumphantly cruising in the Indian seas.

This intelligence, which was asserted with confidence, was diligently improved by the Armenian and Mussulman merchants, who insinuated that, if our present overtures sprung not from treachery, they originated in fear; at the same time renewing a report, which had more than once been current, of a combination of all the powers of India to deprive Great Britain of her possessions in the East, and to expel all Europeans from those shores, which they were represented to have first visited as merchants, and afterwards invaded as usurpers. Although the Birmans probably did not give im-

plicit credit to the last mentioned rumour, yet the news from Europe, cooperating with their own pride, determined them to persist in that arrogant assumption of superiority, which had hitherto been manifested rather in their actions than by their words.

On the 7th of September, Mr Wood, in conformity with the instructions he received, waited on the two senior Woongees, accompanied by Dr Buchanan, and attended by a proportion of the public servants. On his return, he addressed an official letter to me by which it appears, that, in his reception, no part of the respect due to his public character was omitted; whilst in the solicitude expressed for our personal welfare, there was displayed the refined politeness of a polished court. The conversation that he held with the Woongees was nevertheless marked by a circumstance which served to indicate more pointedly the precise line that was intended to be drawn.

On the day of my public introduction at the Lotoo, it was an omission too remarkable to escape notice, that no inquiry whatever had been made respecting the Governor-general of India; nor in the conversations which I afterwards held with the several princes, was the name of the Governor-general once mentioned by them. Such, however, was not the case at the interview between Mr Wood and the Woongees. These ministers inquired particularly concerning Sir John Shore, and the younger Woongee desired to be informed of the extent of the Governor-general's authority; which implied, on his part, either real or assumed ignorance. These questions also, as

appears from Mr Wood's report, did not arise from the casual suggestion of the moment, but were all preconcerted and methodically arranged. The inferences therefore to be deduced from them were grounds on which I might form a judgment. They conveyed something more than a presumption of the real sentiments entertained respecting the delegating authority under which I acted.

There being no plausible pretext for any longer delay, I pressed the Woongees to inform me what his Majesty's pleasure was regarding the several points which I had submitted to his council; and intimated the necessity I was under of obeying the orders of my own government, by returning as speedily as was consistent with the objects for which I had been deputed. In reply to this application, I was apprised, that the presents which his Birman Majesty designed to send to Bengal, in return for those he had received, would be prepared on the 19th of September, on which day, if I would come to the Lotoo, they should be delivered to me, matters of business might be discussed, and I might fix on whatever day I thought proper to depart.

With this desire I willingly acquiesced, as affording me an opportunity of requiring to know his Majesty's real sentiments, as well as the motives that on their part gave rise to a conduct of so mysterious a nature.

Nothing passed in the interval, except that I received intimation through a private and respectable channel, that the court, although no objection would be formally stated, had come to a decided resolution of considering me as a person deputed

from a provincial and subordinate power, and not as the representative of an equal and sovereign state; and that, in pursuance of this estimation, his Majesty did not intend to honour me with a personal audience of leave. Of the truth of this information I had no reason to doubt; but before I took any measures to undeceive the court in a public manner, I deemed it expedient to have an assumption so haughty and imperious verified by the highest authority.

On the 19th of September I proceeded to the Lotoo, where I arrived about twelve o'clock, and found the council of state already assembled; the ministers and the attendant officers being all dressed in their robes and caps of ceremony. A few minutes after we had taken our seats, the presents were brought, consisting of three large boxes, covered with red cloth, and two elephant's teeth of considerable size. These I was desired to receive, in the name of the Birman king, for the English government. At the same time, two large rings were presented to me; one a single ruby set in gold, the other a sapphire, which I was requested to accept as a personal token of his Majesty's favour. A ring was also given to Mr Wood, and another to Dr Buchanan. When this ceremony was ended, I addressed myself in the Birman language to the Wongees, and desired to know whether there were any reasons which applied to my situation, that had induced his majesty to decline honouring me with a personal audience; which compliment, I understood, was usually paid by their court to the deputies of all sovereign states. To this interrogation I received an equivocal reply; and, on repeating it, they persisted in return-

ing an evasive manner. I then desired to be informed whether or not it was his Majesty's intention to receive me in person, before my departure, as the representative of the Governor-general. This question they said they could not answer, not knowing his Majesty's pleasure. I afterwards asked whether the king preserved his intention of sending an authorized person from his court to Bengal, as had been intimated to me by what I conceived to be competent authority; and whether the suggestions, which I had submitted for the advancement and protection of commerce, had been taken into consideration. These several points, they said, were then under discussion, and would be speedily determined. They acquainted me, at the same time, that, if I would fix on any precise period for my departure, the necessary papers and letters should be prepared, and delivered to me two days previous to my setting out. I mentioned the 3d of October. They replied, that the letters should be in readiness by what I understood to be the 1st of October, but, by some misapprehension, was the 30th of September; adding their hope that I would come to town on the 28th of September, the anniversary of Sandaingguit, a day on which all the nobility pay homage to his majesty. To their invitation I answered, that my having that honour must depend on circumstances not yet ascertained.

This interview left me little room to doubt of the estimation in which the Birman court held my public character, notwithstanding it was judged advisable, from motives of policy, to avoid making any direct avowal of such sentiments. Proceeding upon this plan, they concealed all their acts and

determinations with a veil of ambiguity, which it sometimes was extremely difficult to penetrate.

Pride, the chief actuating principle of this arrogant court, was the source to which its conduct, in every transaction of a public nature, might ultimately be traced. The first object of their government is to impress on the minds of the people the most reverential awe of their own sovereign, whose greatness they do not admit to be equalled by that of any monarch upon earth. Without attempting to diminish their veneration for their own prince, it became my duty, from the mode that was adopted in the display of his consequence, to acquaint the ministers, in terms which could not be misconstrued, that there was another power, at no great distance, which would not readily subscribe to its own inferiority, or admit of any act in its negotiations with other states, which might either express or imply an assumption of superiority. It became necessary to inform them, that the Governor-general of India was not, in his relation to their court, or to that of any other Eastern potentate, a subordinate provincial officer ; but a personage in whom sovereign authority over a widely extended empire was efficiently vested ; that, as the representative of such authority, I held an indisputable claim to whatever consideration was granted to the ministers of other nations ; and that the withholding it would be accounted an incivility so great, as probably to prevent the English government from making any future advances for the establishment of a friendly and confidential intercourse.

To convey a truth not less important for them to know than incumbent on me to declare, I de-

terminated to address a letter to the principal Woon-gee and the council of state, expressing my dissatisfaction at the conduct which the Birman court had thought proper to observe in regard to my public character; to require an explanation of those points which comprehended the objects of the embassy; and to demand, that I should be received and acknowledged by the king in person as the representative of an equal and sovereign state.

Had there even been room left for me to hesitate upon the adoption of this step, the following circumstances, which occurred immediately after my interview with the Woongees at the Lotoo, would have decided me in making a public declaration of my sentiments on a mode of behaviour which exceeded even their usual extent of official arrogance, and fell little short of personal indignity.

The custom, which imposes an obligation on a foreign minister, to pay a mark of respect by a trifling present to each member of the royal family to whom he is introduced, has already been noticed. This compliment I offered in person to the several princes on the days of my presentation; and, in order to manifest that it was not my desire to withhold any attention consistent with my situation to grant, soon after the visits of ceremony were ended, I had directed my Moonshee, or Persian secretary, to wait on each of the ministers and the principal officers of the court, and request in my name their acceptance of some rarity, the produce of Europe or of India. The gift to each individual was very trifling. A few yards of European broad cloth, an article of cut-glass, a piece of Bengal muslin or of silk, was received as a polite and handsome testimonial of a friendly disposition. These civilities,

I was informed, were, by a special mandate, ordered to be returned, by every person to whom the attention had been shown, in some production of the Birman country, and of value equal to what had been bestowed.

It being expected that I should wait on the royal princes to receive in person the remuneration which they designed to make for the presents they had obtained, I sent, on the 21st of September, a message to the Engy Teekien, to acquaint him that, if it suited his convenience, I would pay my respects to him the following day, or postpone my visit to any other that he might think proper to appoint. I likewise despatched a messenger with a similar notification to the Prince of Prome. From the first I received a civil reply, excusing himself from seeing me on account of the indisposition of the princess, who had lately been brought to bed; but acquainting me, that, if I chose to attend, the presents for the English government would be delivered to me in the room of his palace, or to any person whom I might appoint to receive them. I replied, that being debarred of the honour of seeing him, I would depute Mr Wood to accept his presents in the name of the Governor-general of India. From the Prince of Prome I had not the honour of an answer.

On the 22d, Mr Wood waited on the Engy Teekien, and was received with much civility at the room by his ministers. The presents were formally produced, and conveyed to our residence by the prince's servants. As the Prince of Prome had not returned an answer to my message, I imagined that some misapprehension had occurred. Being desirous of appearing to put the most favour-

able construction on every part of their conduct, I requested Mr Wood to send a messenger, when he went to the house of Engy Teekien, to apprise the Prince of Prome that he meant afterwards to pay his respects to him. To this intimation was returned what Mr Wood considered a satisfactory reply ; and as soon as the first visit was ended, he proceeded to the Prince of Prome's palace, where the treatment he received was extremely rude. After standing for some time at the outer gate, exposed to the sun, he was informed that the prince was not at home.

However deficient the members of the royal family might be in politeness to me, I determined not to suffer their example to influence my conduct towards them, or to neglect any mark of deference that was due to their illustrious rank. Meedaw Praw, the mother of the queen, being a personage venerable from her age, and dignified from her high connections—her behaviour also, on our introduction, having been distinguished by affability and politeness—I was, for these reasons, desirous of paying such a character particular respect ; and with that view sent a complimentary message to her, similar to that which had been delivered to the two princes. She returned, in answer, that the next day would be perfectly convenient to her for my reception. I likewise intimated to the younger princes my intention of paying them a visit, to which they replied by a verbal compliment.

On the next day, the 23d, I proceeded in form to the house of Meedaw Praw at the appointed hour, and was received with sufficient politeness by her Woon, or principal officer. There were

several persons of rank assembled in the hall when I entered. After we had been seated about a quarter of an hour, a person came forth from the inner apartment, and informed us that the princess had gone to the palace to see the queen her daughter, but would return in a few minutes. This I thought rather an extraordinary step, as she herself had determined the precise time when I was to come. These minutes, however, were protracted to an hour. In the interval, pawn, fruit, and sweetmeats were served up. At length, when her ministers perceived that my patience was exhausted, and I would wait no longer, a message was delivered to me from the princess, excusing her non-appearance on a plea of indisposition; at the same time three gold rings, set with rubies and sapphires, and several boxes, handsomely japanned and painted, were laid before me, and my acceptance of them desired. A conduct marked by such deliberate unpoliteness, would have justified retaliation on my part, by a contemptuous rejection of her presents. I however refrained from any farther indication of displeasure, than withdrawing unceremoniously, without taking any notice of the boxes or rings, which were immediately conveyed to my residence by her servants. Having reason to apprehend that the junior princes meant to observe a similar line of conduct, I declined visiting them, but sent Mr Wood to go through the ceremony of calling at their separate houses. As was expected, he saw not one of the princes, but was received by their Woons, who, though they carefully refrained from absolute rudeness, yet evinced in their conduct the utmost arrogance, under the cloak of supercilious civility.

Such strange and unwarrantable insolence could not be measured by any scale of true policy, and was hardly to be reconciled to reason or common sense. Nor could any part of their conduct be laid to the account of ignorance; for no people on earth better understand, or more pointedly observe, the minute punctilios of official form. No candid and determinate reply could be extorted from them on any point in which their vanity was concerned. What their court intended to concede, I understood, was to be granted, not as an equivalent for reciprocal privileges on our part, but as a boon—as an act of gratuitous condescension to me, in the character of a petitioner, bearing the tribute of homage from an inferior state. Without the hardiness to avow these principles, which a sense of British power, and the proximity of the country, probably suppressed, they nevertheless acted upon them as an assumed fact, with a view to gratify their own pride, elude disagreeable explanations, and reap all the advantages derivable from an intercourse with British India, to which they certainly were far from being averse, provided the correspondence could be maintained upon their own terms.

In pursuance of my determination, I addressed a letter to the chief Woongee and council of state; and, to give it all the publicity that such a declaration ought to have, I sent Mr Wood to deliver it in person to the minister, directing him afterwards to wait on the two junior Woongees, and apprise them formally of my having written a letter of such a tenor.

Nor did I resolve on this measure without ma-

turely considering the effect it was likely to produce, as well as the necessity in which it originated. The court had evidently been embarrassed in the first stages of the business, and was undetermined in what manner to act. To this irresolution I ascribe the petty artifice of misinforming me in matters of fact. The accounts from Europe certainly had great weight in influencing their conduct, and those could only be discredited by my holding higher language than before. To have acquiesced in silence would have been construed into at least a presumptive evidence of our weakness; whilst the slight that was attempted to be cast on the authority delegated to me, left no alternative but to endeavour to remove it by a temperate remonstrance, such as my letter was intended to convey, or to decline any further communication, and withdraw without ceremony. This latter step was not to be taken under any provocation short of personal injury, than which I believe nothing was farther from their intention. To enhance their own importance by the unworthy mode of lessening that of others, seemed to be the sole motive that actuated them, and which, as far as related to the government that I represented, it was clearly my duty to oppose.

My letter was written in the English and the Persian languages.* The intervention of holi-

* It afforded me particular satisfaction to know, that the full purport and expression of my letter could not fail to be conveyed, through the channel of either of these languages, to the Birman court. The Armenian interpreter of English, who had spent the greater part of his life in the Birman country, was a man eminently qualified for the task; he spoke, read, and wrote English, superior to any person I ever knew who had not been in

days prevented the delivery of it before the 26th, when Mr Wood waited on the principal Woongee, and presented it in form. He afterwards called upon the junior Woongees, and acquainted them of his having laid before the senior an address which required their serious consideration.

I imagine, that if this explicit avowal of my sentiments had been made previously to our last mentioned visits to the members of the royal family, we should have had less cause to complain of incivility. Such language, I believe, was not expected. The court had assured itself that the state of our affairs in Europe and in India was so critical, that we would tolerate yet greater arrogance of manner, rather than hazard the interruption of intercourse, and give our enemies the advantage of an alliance which the native vanity of the Birmanians rendered them not unwilling to overrate.

Information was conveyed to me from a respectable quarter, that the fermentation which my remonstrance excited in the council of the Lotoo was by no means moderate. The Woongees, I was told, were divided in their opinions. The discussion continued till twelve o'clock on the night of the 27th, when the result of their deliberations was laid before the king.

Great Britain. It is a singular fact, that the first version of the late Sir William Jones's Translation of the Institutes of Hindoo Law, should be made in the Birman language. When I arrived at Ummerapoora, the Armenian had just completed the work, by command of his Birman majesty. This circumstance offers no mean proof of the liberal and enlightened policy of a prince, who, superior to general prejudice, was willing to seek for information through a medium by which few other nations of the East will condescend to accept of knowledge, however beneficial the attainment might prove to themselves.

Whatever might have been their separate sentiments, the ultimate decision was temperate and wise. I was apprised, late on the evening of the 28th, by a verbal communication from the May-woon of Pegue, that on the day appointed for the delivery of the reply to the Governor-general's letter, I should be formally received at the palace of the king, who would grant me a personal audience in the character to which I laid claim, and that the propositions which I had suggested, for the regulation and encouragement of commerce, had for the most part received his majesty's approbation.

I expressed, in answer, the satisfaction I felt from hearing a resolution so creditable to themselves ; but added, that as the letter I had written was a public and solemn declaration, I should require more than a verbal assurance, before I could consistently subject myself to a repetition of former disappointments, and requested that he would take the trouble to reduce his obliging message to writing. With this he readily complied by a short note written in the Birman language.

The form of receiving the presents, which were brought to me as a return for those that had been given, occupied a considerable portion of the last days. One of the three boxes that had been sent by the king contained amber in large pieces, uncommonly pure ; another, a mass of stone of considerable size, in appearance resembling the chrysoprase ; and the third, a large and beautiful group of crystals, rising from a matrix of amethyst, in the form of prisms, mostly hexagonal or pentagonal, slightly striated on the surface, and terminated at one end by a pyramid composed of three rhom-

boidal planes. It was a very curious production of nature, and doubtless, coming from such a quarter, must have been accounted of great value. The present from the Engy Teekien consisted of six ruby and sapphire rings, two elephants teeth, several japanned boxes, and three horses, small, like all those which the country produces, but extremely well formed. Two were piebald, to match in a carriage, and the other was a bright bay. The principal queen also, whose title is Nandoh Praw, and the second queen, called Myack Nandoh, sent their separate offerings, and added to several rings and specimens of japanned ware, some handsome articles of plate, two large beetle-boxes, of embossed silver, two trays and two drinking cups of the same metal, the workmanship of which did not afford a favourable proof of the skill of their artists. Retributory donations were now brought in troublesome abundance from every individual to whom the smallest gratification had been given; and in some instances the return far exceeded in value what had been received. My house was encumbered with all sorts of Birman utensils in painted and japanned ware, several of which were by no means of a portable size. I was also presented with pieces of silk and cotton cloth, of different dimensions and quality, in number not less than eighty or a hundred; also elephants teeth, amber wrought into beads, fifty or sixty pieces of plate formed into beetle-boxes, mugs, spitting-pots and cups. Precious stones, too, constituted a very general gift, chiefly rubies and sapphires in their native state, rudely set in gold. I received from various persons nearly a hundred of these stones, few

of which were valuable, though some of the sapphires, on being polished by a lapidary, proved to have a very fine water. I must not, however, omit mentioning a beautiful specimen of filagree, in a large silver beetle-box, which was presented to me by one of the Attawoons. The workmanship was minutely delicate, and exquisitely finished; and, in order to enhance the value of the gift, the donor, with a politeness that could not be surpassed in any court, had his title engraven in English letters on the side of the box. A compliment so handsomely conveyed demanded my best acknowledgements; and I regretted exceedingly that the official character which I held denied me the personal acquaintance of this minister, as well as of some others, with whom I should have been happy, under any other circumstances, to have cultivated an intimacy.

On the 30th of September, the day appointed by his Birman majesty to receive the English gentlemen in the character of an imperial deputation, we crossed the lake at ten o'clock in the morning, attended by our customary suite, and accompanied by Baba-Sheen and several Birman officers. We entered the fort, as usual, by the western gate, when, instead of passing, as on former occasions, along the north side of the enclosure of the palace, to reach the street leading down to the Lotoo, we now proceeded round by the south, and in this new direction observed many more houses of distinguished structure than by the other route. In our way we passed through a short street, entirely composed of saddlers and harness-makers shops. On alighting, we were conducted into the rhoom, to wait there until the Engy Teekien should arrive, which he did precisely at the hour of twelve.

Several Chobwas, who were to be introduced on this day, had taken their seats in the rhoom before we entered. Each of them held a piece of silk or cotton cloth in his lap, designed, according to the established etiquette, as a propitiatory offering to his majesty; and on the cloth was placed a saucer, containing a small quantity of unboiled rice, which it seems is an indispensable part of the ceremony. The Birman custom differs in this particular from the usage of Hindostan. A person, on his presentation at the imperial court of Delhi, offers to the sovereign an odd number of the gold coin commonly called Mohurs, * an even number being considered as inauspicious; but the court of Ummerapoorra, with a more delicate refinement, never permits an offering in money, but requires from a foreigner something of the produce of his country, and from a subject some article of manufacture. The donation of rice is not, as in India, when presented by Brahmins to the incarnations of Vishnu, meant as an acknowledgment of divine attributes, but is merely designed as a recognition of the power of the monarch, and an acknowledgment of the property of the soil being vested in him; a truth which is expressively declared, by offering him its most useful production. During our continuance in the rhoom, tea was served to us; and when we advanced to the outer gate, we were not obliged to put off our shoes, but were permitted to wear them until we had

* Mohur is a corrupt name given by Europeans to this coin. Ashurfi is its proper term. Pagoda, likewise, as applied to a coin, is an illegitimate word, of which the natives know nothing except on the authority of their conquerors.

reached the inner enclosure that separates the court of the Lotoo from that of the royal palace, within which not any nobleman of the court is allowed to go with his feet covered. There is a double partition wall dividing the two courts, with an intervening space of ten or twelve feet, through which a gallery leads, that is appropriated exclusively to the use of the king when he chooses to preside in person in the Lotoo.

On entering the gate, we perceived the royal saloon of ceremony in front of us, and the court assembled in all the parade of pomp and decoration. It was an open hall, supported by colonnades of pillars twenty in length, and only four in depth. We were conducted into it by a flight of steps, and, advancing, took our places next the space opposite to the throne, which is always left vacant, as being in full view of his majesty. On our entrance, the basement of the throne, as at the Lotoo, was alone visible, which we judged to be about five feet high. Folding doors screened the seat from our view. The throne, called Yaza-palay, was richly gilded and carved; on each side a small gallery, enclosed by a gilt balustrade extended a few feet to the right and left, containing four umbrellas of state; and on two tables, at the foot of the throne, were placed several large vessels of gold, of various forms, and for different purposes. Immediately over the throne, a splendid piasath rose in seven stages above the roofs of the building, crowned by a tee or umbrella, from which a spiral rod was elevated above the whole.

We had been seated little more than a quarter of an hour, when the folding doors that concealed the seat opened with a loud noise, and discovered

his majesty ascending a flight of steps that led up to the throne from the inner apartment. He advanced but slowly, and seemed not to possess a free use of his limbs, being obliged to support himself with his hands on the balustrade. I was informed, however, that this appearance of weakness did not proceed from any bodily infirmity, but from the weight of the regal habiliments in which he was clad; and if what we were told was true, that he carried on his dress fifteen viss, upwards of fifty pounds avoirdupois of gold, his difficulty of ascent was not surprising. On reaching the top he stood for a minute, as though to take breath, and then sat down on an embroidered cushion with his legs inverted. His crown was a high conical cap, richly studded with precious stones. His fingers were covered with rings, and in his dress he bore the appearance of a man cased in golden armour, whilst a gilded, or probably a golden wing on each shoulder, did not add much lightness to his figure. His looks denoted him to be between fifty and sixty years old, of a strong make, in stature rather beneath the middle height, with hard features and of a dark complexion; yet the expression of his countenance was not unpleasing, and seemed, I thought, to indicate an intelligent and inquiring mind.

On the first appearance of his majesty, all the courtiers bent their bodies, and held their hands joined in an attitude of supplication. Nothing farther was required of us, than to lean a little forward, and to turn in our legs as much as we could—not any act being so unpolite, or contrary to etiquette, as to present the soles of the feet towards the face of a dignified person. Four Bra-

mins, dressed in white caps and gowns, chanted the usual prayer at the foot of the throne. A Nakhaan then advanced into the vacant space before the king, and recited in a musical cadence the name of each person who was to be introduced on that day, and of whose present, in the character of a suppliant, he entreated his majesty's acceptance. My offering consisted of two pieces of Benares gold brocade. Doctor Buchanan and Mr Wood each presented one. When our names were mentioned, we were separately desired to take a few grains of rice in our hands, and, joining them, to bow to the king as low as we conveniently could, with which we immediately complied. When this ceremony was finished, the king uttered a few indistinct words, to convey, as I was informed, an order for investing some persons present with the insignia of a certain degree of nobility. The imperial mandate was instantly proclaimed aloud by heralds in the court. His majesty remained only a few minutes longer, and during that time looked at us attentively, but did not honour us with any verbal notice, or speak at all, except to give the order before mentioned. When he rose to depart, he manifested the same signs of infirmity as on his entrance. After he had withdrawn, the folding doors were closed, and the court broke up.

In descending, we took notice of two pieces of cannon, apparently nine pounders, which were placed in the court, on either side of the stairs, to defend the entrance of the palace. Sheds protected them from the weather, and they were gilded all over. A royal carriage also was in waiting, of curious workmanship, and ornamented with

a royal spire ; there was a pair of horses harnessed to it, whose trappings glistened in the sun.

We returned as usual to the Rhoom, where I understood that the letter from the king to the Governor-general of India was to be presented to me, together with some other documents that comprehended the objects of the embassy. Soon after the members of the royal family had ascended their elephants, the expected letter was brought from the Lotoo on a tray, borne by a Nakhaan, enclosed in a case of wood japanned and covered with a scarlet cloth. The mode of offering it, was not, I conceived, quite so ceremonious as the occasion seemed to require ; and the officer who was charged with the delivery indicated a reluctance to say that it was a letter from the king to the Governor-general of India. This circumstance produced some difficulty, as, without being distinctly informed to whom the letter was directed, I declined accepting it. At length the interpreter, finding I would not receive it on other terms, delivered it in a suitable manner, with a declaration that it was a reply from his Birman majesty to the letter of the British Governor-general of India, and that a copy of a royal mandate was annexed to it, granting to the English nation certain valuable immunities and privileges of trade.

Whilst we were in the outer court, or that in which the Lotoo is situated, we had an opportunity of viewing the immense piece of ordnance found in the fortress of Arracan when captured by the Engy Teekien, which was afterwards conveyed by water to adorn the capital of the conqueror, where it is now preserved as a trophy, and is highly honoured, being gilded, and covered by a

roof of a dignified order. It is formed of brass, rudely manufactured; the length is thirty feet, the diameter at the muzzle two and a half, and the calibre measured ten inches. It is mounted on a low truck carriage supported by six wheels. Near it lay a long rammer and sponge staff, and we perceived several shot made of hewn stone fitted to the calibre. It is remarkable, that most of the spoils which had been brought from Arracan were made of brass. The image of Gaudma, the lions, the demons, and the gun, all transported from thence, are composed of that metal.

The discussion, on the ceremony of delivering the letter being ended, we returned home, preceded by a Miouseree, or inferior secretary, on horseback, bearing in due form the royal letter, and dressed in his cap and gown of office. When we had reached our residence, I immediately addressed the chief minister, to request an official translation of the letter in the Persian language, also of the paper annexed to it; observing, that as public interpreters of that tongue were appointed by the court, and it being well understood by several persons resident at Ummerapoorra, a medium of intercourse could never be wanting, which would be equally intelligible and convenient to their government and to mine. Within two days I received a notification, that his majesty had given orders to supply me with the translation I required.

CHAPTER VIII.

SUBSTANCE OF OFFICIAL PAPERS—PREPARE TO DEPART—CHINESE DEPUTIES—TAKE LEAVE PREPARATORY TO THEIR RETURN—BIRMAN BOOKS—SOLD CLANDESTINELY TO STRANGERS—A MAN IMPRISONED—LIBERAL CONDUCT OF THE COURT—SIAMESE PAINTER—BIRMAN FESTIVAL—THE COURT OF THE QUEEN ATTENDED BY ALL THE WOMEN OF RANK—ILLUMINATIONS—UNCEREMONIOUS VISIT TO THE ENGY TEEKIEN—EMBARK ON BOARD OUR BOATS—DELAYED—LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL WOONGEE TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA—ILL TREATMENT SUFFERED BY ONE OF OUR PEOPLE—INSOLENCE OF THE FOLLOWERS OF THE PRINCE OF TONGHO—LEAVE UMMERAPOORA—VISIT CHAGAING—DESCRIPTION OF THE FORT—ODERUA, OR POT VILLAGE—KIEOCK, THE GREAT MANUFACTORY OF BIRMAN IDOLS—TEMPLE OF COMMODOO PRAW—FIREWORKS—ROCKETS OF EXTRAORDINARY MAGNITUDE—CHAGAING—AN EMPORIUM OF COTTON—ANCIENT AVA—TEMPLE OF LOGATHERPOO PRAW—STUPENDOUS IDOL—SANDAHT, OR ELEPHANT TOWN—KEENDUEM RIVER—NIOUNDOH—PEGAHM—CIVILITY OF THE MIOUDOGEE, OR DEPUTY GOVERNOR—RIDE TO VIEW THE RUINS—CURIOUS TEMPLE—ART OF TURNING ARCHES LOST BY THE BIRMANS—REACH THE TOWN OF SILLAH MEW.

THE intervention of holidays, together with the unavoidable delays of office, protracted the delivery of the Persian translations until the 14th of October; on which day the papers, properly authenticated, were brought from the Lotoo, and delivered to me, by an officer of government. In translating these documents, I carefully collated the Persian version with the Birman original, which I was enabled to do by the assistance of persons on the spot who understood both languages, and found the Persian to be as literal a translation as the different idioms would admit.

The letter of his Birman majesty to the Governor-general is a curious specimen of the extravagant phraseology of oriental composition. A great part of it is the diction of the minister, which may be considered as the preamble of the letter. In this portion are enumerated the royal titles, the honours conferred on the British representative, and the presents that were delivered. It next details the heads of certain propositions, which I had made with a view to advance the commercial interests of both nations. His majesty then speaks in his own person, and, in the pompous style of an order, ratifies immunities of considerable importance to British merchants and mariners.

The paper which accompanied the letter is an order delivered by the principal Woongee, to carry into effect the imperial mandate, and is addressed to the Maywoon of Pegue in particular, as holding the jurisdiction of Rangoon, and to the governors of sea-port towns in general. It, however, became necessary, in order to give full operation to his Majesty's good inten-

tions, to obtain several subsidiary papers, which, by expressing in clear detail the regular dues of government, and specifying the authorized perquisites of office, might prevent in future any arbitrary exactions, and put an end to impositions which had long been practised on British merchants trading to Birman ports, from whom loud complaints had at different times reached the supreme government. These papers I found no difficulty in obtaining. It was determined by them, that all goods of Europe and British India manufacture, imported in British ships, should be subject to a duty of ten per cent. to the king; the price of anchorage and pilotage, for ships of every rate, was determined; the fees of the provincial and port-officers, charges for warehouse room, for interpreters and clearance, the customs to be levied at each house of collection on goods conveying up the river, were accurately defined; and teak timber—to us by far the most valuable commodity which the country produces—was ordered to pay a duty of five per cent. *ad valorem*, at whatever port it might be shipped, and all further exactions on that article were prohibited. The several demands of the port and provincial officers on the masters of ships, which had heretofore been paid in rouni, or pure silver, were directed to be taken in the currency of the place, which, at Rangoon, is mowadzo, or silver depreciated twenty-five per cent.

These regulations, expressed in separate instruments with clearness and precision, were equally liberal and satisfactory; and, on the part of the Birman government, were voluntarily granted, from a conviction of the equity on which they

were founded, and the reciprocal advantages they were likely to produce. From two propositions which I offered, the court thought proper to withhold its acquiescence; but it certainly was the intention of the king and his chief ministers, that the articles which were thus conceded should be carried into complete effect. Intercourse, however, was not yet perfectly established; many obstacles still impeded the way. The road was only opened, and success depended on the discretion of those who should first pursue the track that was now pointed out.

Having thus obtained the objects for which I had been deputed, to an extent that equalled my utmost expectation, I prepared to depart. The waters of the great river had been subsiding for some time, by which the lake became so much reduced, that boats of burden were obliged to leave it, and moor in the stream, the bar of sand at the entrance of the lake being almost dry in the fair season. The vast sheet of water, which, by taking a circuitous direction, had, on our first arrival, induced us to conclude that we were on an island, was now diminished to an inconsiderable surface, and left a large portion of land, which had recently been covered, in a state adapted for the cultivation of rice. We observed the peasants industriously employed in turning up the oozy soil, preparatory to the reception of seed; and it was now manifest that the place of our residence, which, from the encroachment of the periodical waters, we had considered as low, was in fact an elevated and commanding situation.

Early in October, the Chinese deputies, having fulfilled their diplomatic mission, left the grove, to

return to their native country. They embarked on board commodious boats, in which I understood they were to travel for three weeks, and afterwards prosecute their route by land, until they got into the heart of the Chinese dominions, where water carriage is facilitated by numerous canals. They expected to find the cold intense before their arrival at Pekin, a journey which they stated would require three months to perform. I presented the senior, at his last visit to me, with a wrapper of English broad cloth, which he remarked would be more comfortable in his journey among the cold hills of China, in the month of December, than his own garments of silk quilted with cotton. He apologized for not having any thing better to give me in return than some pieces of silk and a few fans; but his son, a promising youth of seventeen, who attended his father in quality of page, and who had been on more familiar terms with us than the natural gravity and public character of the seniors would allow to them, came to take leave of me just before his embarkation, and, observing that he should probably never see me again, entreated my acceptance of his pillow and his purse, as memorials of the son of Keeloree.* When I hesitated in receiving what were conveniences to him, but useless to me, he seemed so much hurt, that I could not wound the feelings of the ingenuous youth, by rejecting his artless token of good will. I had given him at different times a few trifling gratifications, and he could not reconcile

* This I conceive to be rather a title than his real name.

himself to depart without making some return. His pillow was a light lacquered box, about eighteen inches long, circular at top, and covered with a case of silk, so thickly quilted with cotton as to render it soft. In a box of this sort, a Chinese, when he makes a journey, usually carries all his valuables. Though unprovided with a lock, it is not easy to be opened, and the case is closely buttoned. Thus a traveller secures all his property by sleeping on it. This box was not empty. It contained the purse * before mentioned, a steel and flint to light fire, and a bracelet and ring of agate, which the donor assured me were endued with certain cabalistic virtues, to protect the possessor from the perils of the road.

During the time that matters of business were under discussion, and the necessary papers preparing, Mr Wood employed his leisure hours in digesting his survey of the river, and in making astronomical observations, whilst Doctor Buchanan, ever assiduous in the pursuit of knowledge, prosecuted botanical inquiries, and collected general information from every accessible source. Among other things, books in the Birman tongue were brought to him for sale, on which the owners put what seemed to be a very exorbitant price; and, either from real or pretended apprehension, these venders of Birman literature always produced their wares in a clandestine manner; assigning as a reason, that if any person were discovered to

* This purse bore an exact resemblance to the representation in Sir George Staunton's work, of the purse which his Imperial Majesty of China presented to the ambassador's page, when the British embassy was formally introduced.

have sold books to a foreigner without permission, he would be liable to a severe penalty. This assertion we were at first inclined to consider rather as a pretext for enhancing the demand, than as founded on fact. One day, however, we understood that a man had actually been imprisoned for an offence of this nature, and was likely to suffer punishment. I immediately sent a message to the chief Woongee, apprising him of the circumstance, and desiring to know whether it was illegal to sell books to us; that if their law prohibited it, I should reject such as in future might be brought, and direct every person under my authority to do the same. The Woongee returned a civil message, and the man was set at liberty. His majesty, being made acquainted with the affair, summoned, on the following day, the principal Rahaans to attend his council, and submitted to them, whether or not it was consistent with Birman tenets, to grant books that treated of their history and laws, to foreigners. The conclave, I was told, after solemn deliberation, determined in the affirmative; and added, that it was not only admissible, but laudable, for the dissemination of knowledge. His majesty was thereupon pleased to order a handsome copy of the Razawayn, or History of their Kings, and of the Dhermasath, or Code of Laws, to be delivered to me from the royal library. Each was contained in one large volume, written in a beautiful manner, and handsomely adorned with painting and gilding.

My Bengal draftsman, whose labours were principally dictated by Dr Buchanan in the delineation of plants, met at Ummerapoora with a brother artist in a Siamese painter, who was employed by

the court. This man, though not so skilful as the person in my service, was nevertheless of much utility. He furnished me with several drawings, descriptive of the costume of the country, which, though executed with little taste, were finished with the most perfect fidelity. Among other things, he brought me a representation of the Shoepaundogee, or royal barge used by the king when he goes in state on the water. The painter reported, that the length of the vessel was a hundred cubits (more than one hundred and fifty feet). I saw it through a glass, but at too great a distance to observe more than the elevated stern, the royal piasath in the centre, which occupied the place of a mast, and the splendour of the gilding, with which it was entirely covered. The king possesses a great variety of boats. Some of them we had an opportunity of viewing, but the Shoepaundogee is by far the most magnificent.

The Birman month of Sandainguite, which had just expired, is a season of universal festivity and rejoicing; and on the three terminating days solemn homage is paid to the king, to the Engy Teekien, and to the principal queen. At the court of the latter, all the wives and daughters of the nobles pay their respects, unaccompanied by their husbands or any male attendants; and in this assembly as much state and ceremony are observed as at the court of his majesty. The rank which each lady bears in right of her husband, is expressed by her dress and ornaments; female priority being not less scrupulously maintained, than precedence amongst men. We regretted extremely, that their customs did not allow us to attend the queen's court, in the same manner as that of her

illustrious mother. Age and widowhood, it seems, gave the latter a privilege of receiving visits from the other sex, without violating decorum, or incurring reproach.

During the fifteen days of this "decreasing moon," the city was illuminated every night. Lanterns made of different coloured transparent paper were suspended from bamboo scaffolds, and disposed in various shapes, which produced a pleasing effect when seen from our residence on the opposite side of the lake. The superior brilliancy of the lights at the palace was distinguishable above the rest. The Birmans are singularly expert in the display of fireworks of every description.

On the 13th of October, I received a verbal message from the Engy Teekien, that he should be glad to see me on the following day, when he meant to lay aside the parade of state, and honour me with an unceremonious reception. I embraced with pleasure an opportunity of an interview unincumbered with the formalities of regal pomp, and, accompanied by a few attendants, proceeded on horseback to his palace at the appointed time. As soon as my arrival was announced, I was immediately introduced without the previous ceremony of waiting in the rhoom. On this occasion he did not, as formerly, exhibit himself from a casement window like a pagod, but was seated at the upper end of the hall, upon a couch richly adorned with the customary ornaments. His dress was very simple. He wore a white vest of fine muslin, with a lower garment of silk, and his head was bound with an embroidered fillet. Several personages of rank were present,

habited also in a plain manner, but distinguished by their gold tzaloe, or chain of nobility. The deportment of the prince at this interview was perfectly frank, and free from ostentation. I was disappointed, however, in his conversation. I expected that he would, by inquiring into the state of the British provinces, and the causes of their prosperity, have sought for information that might hereafter prove beneficial to the country over which he is one day presumptively to reign. His discourse took a quite different turn. He asked only frivolous questions, and endeavoured to amuse me by the prattle of two sprightly children, his daughters. Half an hour having been spent in this trifling manner, I withdrew, and paid a visit to the Maywoon of Pegue, who told me that it was his intention to accompany us back to Rangoon, where he would order every necessary to be provided for our convenience and accommodation.

The distance to which our boats were obliged to remove, rendered the transportation of our baggage a work of labour. After conveying it across the lake, it was to be laden on carts, and drawn for two miles over what was now a plain of sand, but at the time of our arrival had been a wide sheet of water, navigated by vessels of considerable burden. The communication between the lake and the river was now completely closed.

On the 23d of October we began to send off our heaviest articles. The commissary, or Kye-woon, had taken care to provide a carriage and labourers, the expense of which we were not suffered to defray. What I gave to the people, was considered as a private gratification.

Having embarked most of our baggage, Mr Wood and Dr Buchanan, with a proportion of the attendants, left me early on the 25th, to go on board the boats. I remained until evening, waiting for some papers which I expected from the city. Horses were in readiness for us to mount, on the opposite side of the lake.

On leaving Tounzemahn, as the boat pushed from the shore, I looked back with pleasure at the grove, under the shade of which we had resided, and bade a glad but not unthankful adieu to an habitation where I had experienced kind hospitality, and spent three months in a manner that could not fail to impress me with a lasting recollection of the scene. To be placed in so singular and interesting a situation, cannot often occur; nor can the images created by it be easily obliterated from the mind.

Riding across the plain over which I had lately sailed, I perceived that part of it was already under tillage, but the largest portion was left for pasture. During the inundation, canoes navigated between the houses of the lower suburbs of the city, and all communication was maintained by water. But carts now plied in dusty lanes, and the foundations of the buildings were at least fifteen feet above the level of the river. Our boats were at a creek called Sakyngua, where a number of trading vessels were also moored, some of them of considerable burden. The noise of the boatmen on the bank, and the smoke from the fires which they made, rendered the situation by no means agreeable.

Various causes conspired to detain us at Sakyngua Creek until the 29th. In the interval, I re-

ceived a short letter from the principal Woongee, directed to the Governor-general of India, containing a desire of the king to procure certain religious books written in the Shanscrit language; likewise that a Birman, well versed in astronomy, might be sent from Bengal to his court, to instruct his own professors, of whose ignorance in that science his majesty was fully sensible. The letter, however, laid as much stress on the purity of the preceptor's cast as on the extent of his knowledge; and comprehended a curious addition to the request, that a Bramin woman should accompany the sage, with a view, I imagine, of propagating a race of hereditary astronomers. I informed the Woongee, in reply, that Bramins of learning have an invincible dislike to leave their native country, even for a limited period; but to emigrate with their families, I conceived, was an act to which no temptation would induce them. I added, that the principles of the English government did not allow of force being used, to compel a subject into exile, who had not by any crime forfeited the protection of the law. This, I dare say, was not very intelligible doctrine to the despotic monarch of Ava, and at all events must have been perfectly novel.

Whilst we remained at this place, one of our people received ill treatment from the natives, which was remarkable, as being the first instance that had occurred. Dr Buchanan, desirous of enriching his collection of plants with every rare production of the country, used to employ a peasant boy of Bengal to gather herbs for him, whom he every day sent for that purpose into the fields. The followers of the Prince of Tongho happened to re-

side in this quarter, a class of men notorious among Birmans for their insolence and dishonesty. The lad unluckily chanced one day to meet a party of these ruffians, who took from him his knife, basket, and turban, and, threatening to put him to death, so frightened him that he botanized no more till we were out of their reach. I had before heard much of the ferocity of these people, who were very numerous. Report made their numbers ten thousand. They were always quarrelling with the followers of the other princes, particularly those of the Prince of Prome. It was said that the king had, on one occasion, whilst we were at Ummerapoorra, sharply reprimanded his son, the Tongho Teekien, and confined his Woon, or minister, for not keeping his people in better subjection. I took no notice of their conduct. It was not expedient, at my departure, to make a public complaint of such a petty outrage.

The river, which three months before had displayed an uninterrupted expanse of several miles, was now broken into separate streams, surrounding numerous islands, which had just emerged from the inundation. The principal branch of the river, even in its diminished state, was a mile wide. Dr Buchanan and I crossed in a small boat to an island where some fishermen and gardeners had begun to erect huts, in which they reside until returning floods in the ensuing year force them to abandon their habitations. They seemed to have the means of comfortable livelihood. Their gardens were already sown with the sweet potato, convolvulus batatas, pulse, and brenjals, solanum melongena: the latter are usually transplanted. The soil was

extremely dry, notwithstanding it had so recently been covered with water, and the pasturage was luxuriant. The inhabitants possessed cattle and poultry in abundance, and doubtless were supplied with excellent fish.

Early on the 29th, the Maywoon of Pegue visited me, in a very handsome war-boat gilded to the water's edge, accompanied by several others that were plain. He invited me on board, and we took our seats on the prow, which, in Birman boats, is always the place of dignity. When we left the shore, the whole fleet pushed off and followed us. The morning was fine, and the water smooth, whilst the spires of Ummerapoorra in our stern, the white temples and lofty hills of Chagaing opposite, and the fort of ancient Ava below, formed a very cheerful prospect. We rowed to Chagaing, where, soon after our arrival, the Maywoon took leave of me, to return to the capital, having business to detain him a few days longer. He, however, promised to overtake us on the way down, his boats being better adapted than ours for expedition.

After dinner, Doctor Buchanan and I walked out to view the fort of Chagaing, which, in the days of Namdoo Praw, had been the seat of empire. We entered under a gateway, the arch of which was wide and well turned. This fort had nothing to distinguish it from others that have been already described. It was not nearly so large as that of Ummerapoorra, or even equal in extent to the lines of ancient Ava. The defences were suffered to fall into ruins, and the houses were meanly built among weeds and rubbish. We observed a well supplied herb market, which was

attended wholly by women. Passing through the fort, we crossed a narrow fosse on a handsome wooden bridge, the length of which indicated, that during the monsoon the inundation extended to a considerable distance; and a little farther, we came to the great road leading to Meengoung. On our right, lay the low conical hills, whose summits, crowned with white temples, form such conspicuous objects from the river. Advancing about a mile, we arrived at a village called Oderua, or Pot Village, from its being a manufactory of earthen ware. The lateness of the evening prevented our further progress. We returned by a road that led to the left of the fort, passing in our way a neat village situated near the banks of the river.

By means of our horses, we now enjoyed a convenience which, in coming up, we did not possess. A platform had been constructed in a broad boat, capable of containing five horses. We brought three from the capital, and added two others on the way down. Little trouble was occasioned by embarking or landing them; the Birman grooms were expert, and the beasts tractable. Early next morning we mounted, and pursued the route of the preceding evening. Numerous temples lined the road on either side, but one only of the number attracted particular notice. It was surrounded by a high brick wall, from which elephants heads, formed of masonry, were protruded in such a manner as to give the wall an appearance of being supported on the backs of those animals. The temple was a pyramid of brick, about one hundred feet high, ornamented with a gilded umbrella. Passing through Pot Village, we came to a town

called Kyeock Zeit, remarkable for being the great manufactory of marble idols, the inhabitants of which were statuaries by trade. I saw thirty or forty large yards crowded with artists at work on images of various sizes, but all of the same personage, Gaudma, sitting cross-legged on a pedestal. The quarries, whence the materials are procured, are only a few miles distant. The marble is brought hither in shapeless blocks; and after being fashioned, the images are publicly sold to those who have grace enough to purchase them. The largest that I observed, a little exceeded the human size, the price of which, they said, was one hundred tackals, twelve or thirteen pounds, but some diminutive Gaudmas were to be disposed of, as low as two or three tackals. The Leedegee or steersman of my boat, bought one to protect us on the way down. The workmen were extremely civil and communicative. They would not part with their sacred commodity, I was told, to any except Birmans; but they answered our questions with good humour; and our curiosity neither excited surprise, nor gave umbrage. Their tools are simple. They shape the image with a chisel and mallet, and afterwards smooth it by freestone and water. Many of the idols were beautifully polished, which, I understood, was effected by rubbing the marble with three different sorts of stone, the first rough, the second finer, and the third such as hones are made of: the workmen afterwards use the palms of their hands. This operation gives it a transparent clearness, far surpassing the brightest polish of which European marble is susceptible. Such images as were designed for gilding did not receive so high a finishing,

Half a league further we came to where the temple of Kommodoo rears its massive and antique pile. This venerable and curious edifice stands on an eminence, which renders it a conspicuous object at the distance of many miles. It is composed of solid masonry without cavity of any sort, and in shape resembles a bell. There is a high railing of wood encircling it, twelve feet distant from the base. The circumference on the outside of the railing, by my measurement, was four hundred paces, perhaps three hundred and fifty yards, and the height did not appear less than three hundred feet. It ended in a clumsy cone, undorned by a spire or the customary umbrella, and exhibited a striking contrast to the elegant and still larger temple of Shoemadoo. Indeed, the style of its structure indicated, that it was built either by a people possessing totally different notions of architecture, or at a far more remote period. It was much the most inelegant and heavy building that we had seen in the country. The roof had once been richly gilded, and the remains of wooden galleries, from which the paint and gilding were not quite obliterated, lay scattered around. These ornaments had probably been often renewed since the first erection of the temple. Kommodoo was once celebrated for its sanctity, and is still held in great reverence. Many devotees were sauntering round the hill, whilst others were prostrate at their devotions. The Birmanians boast of the antiquity of this building. They ascribe its rise to supernatural agency, and fix its date further back than the Mosaic era. These, however, were the tales of ignorance, to conceal

the want of knowledge ; but the traces of long duration were certainly evident, and from its size and form Kommodoo Praw seems likely to resist the effects of time for many ages.

From the site of Kommodoo, we had an extended view of the river winding through a rich and level country. A considerable lake lay to the southward. The plains were now cultivating, whilst numerous villages and herds of cattle denoted population and plenty. At a short distance from the foot of the hill was a long avenue formed by a double row of tamarind trees of uncommon stateliness and beauty, under the shade of which a line of shops was erected on either side, where, besides provisions and cloth, utensils in brass-ware, and fireworks, were sold. On a green, a little way retired from the road, we observed a number of people employed in making rockets, the tubes of which were the solid trunks of trees bored after the manner of a pump. In some, the cavity of the cylinder was nine or ten inches in diameter, and the wood about two inches thick. The length of these tubes varied from twelve to twenty feet. They were filled with a composition of charcoal, saltpetre, and gunpowder, rammed in very hard. The enormous size of Birman rockets has already been noticed, in the account given of the fireworks of Pegue; but several that we saw here, far exceeded those in magnitude. The large ones are fired from a high scaffold erected for the purpose. Bamboos fastened together, of a length adapted to preserve the poise, form the tail of the rocket. In this branch of pyrotechny the Birmans take particular delight, and are extremely skilful.

The day was now far advanced, and the sun be

come powerful. Having satisfied our curiosity, we galloped back to our boats, a distance of about seven miles. I took notice, in my way, of frequent sheds built at the side of the road, in which pots of water were placed for the refreshment of travellers.

Chagaing is the principal emporium to which cotton is brought from all parts of the country, and where, after being cleaned, it is embarked for the China market. Females perform the labour of clearing it from the seeds. This is effected by double cylinders turned by a lathe, which the woman works with her foot, whilst she supplies the cotton with her hands. I was told that the most opulent merchant in the empire resides at Chagaing, who deals solely in this article. In the afternoon we loosed our boats, and dropped down to Ava on the opposite side.

Early on the following morning, I walked out to examine the ruins of this deserted capital. The disposition of its streets and buildings nearly resembled that of Ummerapoora at the present day. We could trace the separate divisions of the palace, amidst heaps of rubbish overgrown by weeds and thorns. On the spot where, but a few years since, the Lotoo stood, and justice was administered to a mighty empire, pulse and Indian corn were now growing. Passing to the westward, among ruinous walls and fallen temples, we came upon a good road; and a miserable old woman, "the sad historian" and living emblem of the place, pointed out the way to Logatherpoo Praw, formerly the residence of the Seredaw, or high priest of the empire, where the colossal image of Gaudma was still to be viewed.

The area on which the temple stands, is a square surrounded by an arcade of masonry; on each side, nine cubical towers are erected, and several buildings are comprehended within the space enclosed by the arcade. The temple in which the stupendous idol is placed, differs from the other pyramidal buildings, by having an arched excavation that contains the image. On entering this dome, our surprise was greatly excited at beholding such a monstrous representation of the divinity. It was a Gaudma of marble seated on a pedestal, in its customary position. The height of the idol, from the top of the head to the pedestal on which it sat, was nearly twenty-four feet. The head was eight feet in diameter, and across the breast it measured ten; the hands were from five to six feet long; the pedestal, which was also of marble, was raised eight feet from the ground. The neck and left side of the image were gilded, but the right arm and shoulder remained uncovered. The Birman asserted, that this, like every other Gaudma which I had seen of the same material, was composed of one entire block of marble; nor could we, on the closest inspection, observe any junction of parts. If what they said was true, it remains a matter of much curiosity, to discover how such a ponderous mass could be transported from its native bed, and raised in this place. The building had evidently been erected over the idol, as the entrance would scarcely admit the introduction of the head. No intelligent Birman happening to be with us, all that I could learn in answer to my inquiries, was, that the image had been placed there an hundred years ago, by a king named Podoo Sembuan.

Whatever may be its real history, it is an extraordinary specimen of idolatrous extravagance.

On our return, we perceived a man driving a cart drawn by a pair of oxen, which was filled with rubbish from the ruined buildings. I learnt that he was carrying the load to a neighbouring brook to wash it, expecting to discover gold, silver, or some article of value, which not unfrequently happened. Old Ava is said to be the resort of numerous thieves, who find shelter and places of concealment among the decayed religious edifices.

Our researches being ended, we re-embarked, and immediately got under way, the boatmen using their oars with just sufficient force to accelerate in a slight degree our motion down a gently gliding current. The river, except in those places where islands divided its stream, was above a mile wide. A little before sunset, we brought to for the night on the left hand, under a high bank near the town of Sandaht, and in the evening we took our customary walk, which at this place was among lanes, separated by hedge-rows, enclosing fields planted with pulse, sesamum, and Indian corn.

We left Sandaht betimes the next morning, and continued to float down the stream, with little exertion or labour to our people. The river having fallen at least fifteen feet since the time we came up, we could not, as before, observe the towns and villages on each side, nor indeed could any object be seen that was not immediately on the edge of the banks, which hung perpendicularly over the river, in many places to a considerable height; but we knew when a town or a collection of houses was nigh, by the steps that were cut in the bank for the convenience of fetching water. About

four o'clock we passed the place where the Keen-duem unites with the Irrawaddy. The mouth of the former did not seem to be much diminished by the change of season. We brought to in the evening, on the east side, in the neighbourhood of a poor village, a short way below Tirroup Mew, where the country presented a cheerful aspect. Grass was growing, and cattle feeding in every direction.

On the following day, November 2d, we continued to travel in the same tranquil manner, the current of the river flowing two or three miles an hour with an unruffled surface. The weather was serene, and the temperature of the air moderate. Abundance of water-fowl, collected on the sands which had recently emerged from the inundation, afforded us good shooting. As we approached the city of Nioundoh, I made inquiry concerning the excavations in the banks, which formerly had been the retreats of hermits, and was told that no person would now venture to explore them, as they had become the habitations of innumerable snakes and other noxious reptiles. We brought to in the evening among a fleet of at least two hundred large trading boats, which were moored at the bank, waiting to deliver or receive a lading. Nioundoh is a place of much commerce, having usurped all the trade that formerly was carried on at Pagahm. Cotton, japanned ware, and oil extracted from sesamum, are the principal articles of exportation. The land adjacent to the town did not wear a more fertile aspect than when we passed it four months before;—no change of season could effect an alteration in its barren soil; but on the opposite bank of the river, rich crops

were waving, and cattle grazing in luxuriant pasture.

Early on the following day we left Nioundoh, and reached Pagahm by breakfast time. Although the distance by land is so short that Nioundoh may be called the modern appendage to ancient Pagahm, yet we were above two hours between them, owing to the circuitous course of the river, which lengthens the way to eight or nine miles.

Mention of Pagahm has often occurred in this narrative, a city celebrated for its numerous temples, and the traces which it bears of former magnificence. To examine its extensive and various ruins with the accuracy of a speculative traveller, would have occupied more time than we had to spare. Shortly after the fleet had brought to, I was visited by the Mioudogee, or the person who governed the town and district in the absence of the prince. He informed me, that his royal master was expected on the following day from Umerapoor. In the afternoon we walked out to view a very curious and ancient temple, which was repairing at the expense of the Engy Teekien, or prince royal. It was built of masonry, and comprehended several arches forming separate domes, into which four arched porches led, that faced the four cardinal points. On each side of the doors, in recesses in the wall, were seated gigantic human figures made of stucco, with large staring eyes, and the head protruded forward, as if to look at those who approached the threshold. These, I was told, were the supernatural porters of the doors, whose power of perception was such, that they could penetrate the recesses of the human breast, and discover the sincerity of devotion. The Mioudo-

gee observed, that it was the prince's intention to gild this temple ; and that four viss of gold, about the value of six hundred pounds, were already prepared for that purpose. He added, that a considerable sum of silver had been expended on the repairs.

We were on this occasion informed of a circumstance that shows how easily an art, once well known, may be lost to a country from disuse and the capriciousness of fashion. Notwithstanding that well-formed arches of brick are still to be seen in many of the ancient temples, yet Birman workmen can no longer turn them. Masonry has not in latter ages been much practised : wooden buildings have superseded the more solid structures of brick and mortar.

On our return, the Mioudogee politely invited us to stop and rest ourselves at his house. We accepted the invitation, and were ushered into a commodious dwelling enclosed by a railing, where we found several persons seated in a spacious hall. Soon after our entrance, the Mioudogee's wife came forth from an inner apartment, and sat down by her husband. She was attended by two female servants, and held by the hand her daughter, a pretty delicate child about eight years of age, who was not at all alarmed at the sight of strangers, but came and examined my hat and epaulette with much engaging familiarity. Her father was extremely civil. Not knowing that we had horses, he kindly offered us the use of his, if we chose to remain another day, and amuse ourselves by riding through the ancient city, which was too extensive to be traversed in so short a time on foot. Doctor Buchanan having expressed a wish to examine the

Launzan, a rare species of plant, he promised to send one of his people on the following day, some distance off, to procure it for him, which he punctually performed. Such instances of genuine hospitality are amongst the highest gratifications that a traveller can experience.

Next morning we mounted our horses at an early hour, pursuing an eastward direction, on a road that led to hills called Torroendong, about ten miles distant, beyond which, and more southerly, we perceived Poupa, a conical mountain mentioned in our former journey. On each side of the road, innumerable religious buildings appeared, in every stage of dilapidation. At the distance of two or three miles from the river, the soil became less barren. A few inconsiderable gardens were enclosed by the inhabitants, sown chiefly with Indian corn and pulse, and in some places the cotton plant was growing. We continued our ride five or six miles, as far as a small village named Minangdoo, where the ruins seem to end in that direction. There I saw for the first time a kioum, or monastery, built of masonry. We got back about twelve o'clock, and found crowds of people assembled at the water-side, waiting for the arrival of the Prince of Pagahm, who was hourly expected. All the men of distinction belonging to the city had gone up the river to meet him. In order to make more room near the spot where he was to land, we loosened our boats, and removed to a situation lower down. Shortly after the fleet came in sight. We were at too great a distance to distinguish the prince's barge, the decorations of which were said to be very handsome; but we saw an immense

number of boats, and heard the shouts of the people, who welcomed their royal governor with every demonstration of joy.

Being unacquainted with the etiquette proper to be observed on such an occasion, I consulted the Mioudogee, whether a visit from me was expected, or would be agreeable to the prince. He replied, that my paying a visit would lay the prince under the necessity of desiring our stay for two or three days, to partake of an entertainment. As such a ceremony could not be convenient to him, and had no inducement for me, I sent Baba-Sheen to apologize in my name, pleading haste and the lateness of the season as my excuse for not having the honour to wait on him.

At sunrise next morning, the Prince of Prome passed by, with a very numerous and noisy retinue. From the number of boats, there could not be fewer than three or four thousand persons. All the boatmen were singing in unison with the strokes of their oars. The Maywoon of Pegue, who was in his suite, sent me a complimentary message, saying that he meant to attend the prince as far as Meeaday, his own jaghire, or estate, where he should wait our arrival.

We were delayed at Pagahm, by our boat people, till near ten o'clock, when we pushed off. The river, during the early part of this day, where islands of sand did not intervene, was not less than two miles wide. At one place, however, the channel contracted, and the current rushed round a projecting rock, with excessive rapidity. We saw several ranges of hills, some of which approached near the river, but these were of no considerable magnitude. The Arracan mountains, fifty or sixty

miles distant, which were visible at intervals, towered high above the rest. In the evening we reached Sillamew, an ancient city which had once been a place of considerable note. A little way to the northward, we perceived the ruins of a brick fort, erected in a very judicious situation; the ditch and wall were still to be traced. We had been so much engaged, when we were here before, with the silk and cotton merchants who brought their goods to sell, that we entirely overlooked the site of this fortress; an oversight that might easily happen, as its ramparts and towers are nearly level with the dust.

CHAPTER IX.

ARRIVE AT SEMBEWGHEWN—POLITENESS OF THE MAYWOON OF ARRACAN—YANANGHEOUM—WELLS OF PETROLEUM—PATANAGO—MEEADAY—FRIENDLY ATTENTION OF THE MAYWOON OF PEGUE—KAYN, OR MOUNTAINEERS—STRANGE CUSTOM—NOTIONS OF RELIGION—PULOO—PROME—VISIT THE SITE OF AN ANCIENT CITY—PEEINGHEE—MAYAHOUN—PREJUDICE OF BIRMAN BOATMEN—DISAGREEABLE CIRCUMSTANCE—WESTERN RIVER—DENOOW—ENTER THE RANGOON BRANCH OF THE IRRAWADDY—MOSQUITOES—MEET CAPTAIN THOMAS—ARRIVE AT RANGOON,

WE departed from Sillahmew at the customary hour, and by nine o'clock in the morning reached Sembewghewn on the east bank of the river. The town is a league inland ; but there is a village at the place where boats usually stop. We perceived a temporary house at some distance, such as is built for the accommodation of a man of rank when he travels, surrounded by small huts ; and were informed that it was the encampment of the governor of Arracan. This officer had been newly appointed, and was on his way to take possession

of his vice-royalty, which confers the title of May-woon on the possessor, and is accounted one of the most important governments of the empire. I sent a message to him with compliments, and a request that he would forward a despatch for me to Chittagong, the frontier British province that borders on Arracan. He obligingly undertook the commission, and punctually fulfilled his promise. I had afterwards the satisfaction to know, that the first advice which the Governor-general received of my proceedings at Ummerapoora, was by this conveyance.

We continued at Sembewghewn only a short time. I did not land; but the Doctor went on shore. He saw nothing, however, that merited particular notice. Mr Wood remained till the afternoon, to observe the distance between the sun and moon; the latter being at this time visible, and the sky unclouded. We rowed till two o'clock, at which hour we reached Yaynangheoum, or Petroleum Creek—a place already noticed in our journey up the river.

Doctor Buchanan partook of an early dinner with me; and when the sun had descended so low as to be no longer inconvenient, we mounted our horses to visit the celebrated wells that produce the oil, an article of universal use throughout the Birman empire. The face of the country was cheerless and sterile; the road, which wound among rocky eminences, was barely wide enough to admit the passage of a single cart; and in many places, the track in which the wheels must run was a foot and a half lower on one side than the other. There were several of these lanes, some

more circuitous than others, according to the situation of the small hills among which they led. Vehicles, going and returning, were thus enabled to pursue different routes, except at particular places, where the nature of the ground would only admit of one road. When a cart came to the entrance of such a defile, the driver hallooed out to stop any that might interfere with him from the opposite side, no part being sufficiently wide for two carts to pass. The hills, or rather hillocks, were covered with gravel, and yielded no other vegetation than a few stunted bushes. The wheels had worn ruts deep into the rock, which seemed to be rather a mass of concreted gravel, than hard stone, and many pieces of petrified wood lay strewn about. It is remarkable, that wherever these petrifications were found, the soil was unproductive, and the ground destitute of verdure. The evening being far advanced, we met but few carts. Those which we did observe were drawn each by a pair of oxen, and of a length disproportionate to the breadth, to allow space for the earthen pots that contained the oil. It was a matter of surprise to us, how they could convey such brittle ware, with any degree of safety, over so rugged a road. Each pot was packed in a separate basket, and laid on straw; notwithstanding which precaution, the ground all the way was strewn with the fragments of the vessels, and wet with oil; for no care can prevent the fracture of some in every journey. As we approached the pits, which were more distant than we had imagined, the country became less uneven, and the soil produced herbage; it was nearly dark when we reached them, and the labourers had retired from work. There seemed to be a great

many pits within a small compass. Walking to the nearest, we found the aperture about four feet square, and the sides as far as we could see down were lined with timber; the oil is drawn up in an iron pot, fastened to a rope passed over a wooden cylinder, which revolves on an axis supported by two upright posts. When the pot is filled, two men take the rope by the end, and run down a declivity, which is cut in the ground, to a distance equivalent to the depth of the well. Thus, when they reach the end of their track, the pot is raised to its proper elevation; the contents, water and oil together, are then discharged into a cistern, and the water is afterwards drawn off through a hole at the bottom. Our guide, an active intelligent fellow, went to a neighbouring house and procured a well rope, by means of which we were enabled to measure the depth, and ascertained it to be thirty-seven fathoms; but of the quantity of oil at the bottom we could not judge. The owner of the rope, who followed our guide, affirmed, that when a pit yielded as much as came up to the waist of a man, it was deemed tolerably productive. If it reached to his neck, it was abundant; but that which rose no higher than the knee was accounted indifferent. When a well is exhausted, they restore the spring by cutting deeper into the rock, which is extremely hard in those places where the oil is produced. Government farm out the ground that supplies this useful commodity; and it is again let to adventurers, who dig wells at their own hazard, by which they sometimes gain, and often lose, as the labour and expense of digging are considerable. The oil is sold on the spot for a mere trifle; I think two or three hundred pots for a

tackal, or half-a-crown. The principal charge is incurred by the transportation and purchase of vessels. We had but half gratified our curiosity when it grew dark, and our guide urged us not to remain any longer, as the road was said to be infested by tigers, that prowled at night among the rocky uninhabited ways, through which we had to pass. We followed his advice, and returned, with greater risk, as I thought, of breaking our necks from the badness of the road, than of being devoured by wild beasts. At ten o'clock we reached our boats without any misadventure.

We left Yaynangheoum before sunrise, and, committing ourselves to the current, glided almost imperceptibly down the stream, the boatmen lying in idle ease, some on the roof, and others on the lateral platforms of the vessel; whilst their only occupation was singing, praying, and sleeping by turns. The present manner of passing their time, was a contrast to what they experienced on the former journey, during which their labour had been excessive and without intermission. They all appeared pleased to return to Rangoon, where the necessaries of life are much cheaper than at the capital. We lay this night near the town of Patanago, a place already noticed. Walking out in the afternoon, I started several hares. The country abounds in game, and is beautifully diversified with hanging woods and rising grounds.

The fleet parted from Patanago very early. Dr Buchanan's boat going ahead of the rest, he reached Loonghee half an hour before his companions, and, profiting by his celerity, went on shore at this romantic spot, where we had passed several days on our journey upwards. He walked to some dis-

tance, in the hope of finding fruit on a tree which about four months before he had left in the earliest stage of blossom ; but the fruit had since that time ripened and decayed, and the tree was now putting forth fresh flowers. Between this place and Meeaday, there are several ridges of low hills, clothed with wood, and destitute of cultivation, which my people said were the haunts of numerous tigers and elephants. At sunset we got to Meeaday, and perceived a number of boats fastened to the bank below the town, and among others we distinguished that of the Maywoon of Pegue. I immediately sent a message to his house, notifying our arrival, and in return received a civil reply, expressing a desire to see me.

On the following morning, about nine o'clock, a nephew of the Maywoon came down to welcome us. After conversing some time, I walked with him to visit his relation, by whom I was received with every demonstration of friendship. He politely asked me to remain at Meeaday for a day or two, and visit his garden and country house. But as the season was advanced, I felt solicitous to avoid unnecessary delay, and therefore excused myself. In fact, our stay would have put him to an inconvenience, having business, he said, to adjust on his estate, which would employ him for several days, but he expected to arrive at Rangoon as soon as ourselves. On my expressing a desire to see some of the mountaineers called Kayn, he obligingly offered to send one of his attendants to a village a few miles off, inhabited by these people, with directions to bring some of them for our inspection, dressed in the proper garb of their country. I understood from him that, since our de-

parture from Ummerapoora, not less than 50,000 persons had left that city, in the train of the several princes and men of rank, who, after paying homage at the golden feet, had returned to their respective governments. When I took leave, he ordered a pair of horses to be brought from his stable, and requested my acceptance of them. They were very handsome, and one was of an uncommon colour, having a number of circular black spots on a milk white skin. In return, I presented him with a marquee made of European canvas, lined with English broad cloth, and my rifle-barrelled gun, which I more highly valued.

In the evening I walked over grounds which I had often trode before. Every thing in this district seemed to be flourishing. The peasants and farmers acknowledge, in the Maywoon, a mild and beneficent landlord. If they were not so opulent as some, they were not so poor as many others. Content, I thought, shone in every countenance, and comfort appeared to be an inmate of every dwelling. In my walks I saw a good deal of game, and shot a henza, or Braminy goose. The natives, although it is the symbol of their nation, hold the bird in no estimation. It is somewhat larger than a barnacle; the plumage is beautiful, but the flesh indifferent.

Next morning, on my return from a long ride, I found a number of people collected on the banks opposite to our boats. These, I learned, were the Kayn, or mountaineers, with their conductors, for whom the Maywoon had sent on the preceding day. I desired that the principal man and woman should be brought on board. This curious couple were dressed in their best attire, consisting of an

ill shaped sleeved coat made of coarse black cotton cloth. That of the man was much shorter than the woman's. Both were bordered with stripes of white, red, and yellow. The man had a belt over his right shoulder, from which was suspended a pouch, ornamented with strings and small shells. On their heads they wore fillets nearly in the Birman manner. To the woman's were fastened tassels, composed of the Calyptra of the *Buprestis ignita*. She had also decorated her neck and arms with many strings of beads and cowries; but the most remarkable part was her face, which was tattooed all over in lines mostly describing segments of circles. This ceremony, which in some other countries is performed on the parts of women not publicly exposed, among the Kayn is confined wholly to the visages of their females, to which, in the eye of an unaccustomed beholder, it gives a most extraordinary appearance. The aspect of the woman, though she was not old, nor in other respects ugly, from the effect of the operation was truly hideous. I asked the origin of the custom. This they did not know, but said it had existed from time immemorial, and that it was invariably performed on every female at a certain age. I immediately employed my painter to make a drawing of these singular figures, in the attitude in which they stood before me—a task which he performed in two hours, with great exactness, and drew striking resemblances. There was some difficulty in taking a likeness of the man, who was alarmed and restless, from a supposition that we were imposing magical spells upon him; but the woman stood still with her hands crossed, apparently in perfect good humour and content. They spoke

the Bírman language indifferently; and, in order to engage their attention, we asked the man several questions, where he expected to go when he died? He replied, that he should again become a child. Who will make you a child? "The Mounzing." Who are the Mounzing? "The father and mother of the world, who grow on the earth as two trees in a field, one ever green, the other dry." What he meant by this metaphor we could not tell, unless it was a type of successive and eternal renovation and decay. He added, that the Mounzing resided on the great mountain Gnowa, where the images of the dead are deposited. They had no idea of a place of future rewards and punishments, and deny the existence of sin in their country. They do not pray whilst living, because they cannot, in this life, see the Mounzing, but they think that their images pray to them after mortal decease. They burn their dead, and afterwards collect their ashes in an urn, which they convey to a house, where, if the urn contain the relics of a man, they keep it six days, if a woman, five; after which it is carried to the place of interment, and deposited in a grave, and on the sod that covers it, is laid a wooden image of the deceased, to pray to the Mounzing, and protect the bones and ashes.

These are the rude notions of religion entertained by the harmless untaught race that inhabit the lofty mountains which divide Arracan from Ava, and who, as children of nature, delighting in their wild and native freedom, are for the most part insuperably averse to hold any commerce with the people of the plains. The Birmans, since the conquest of Arracan, have compelled many, and al-

lured a few, to settle in villages at the bases of the hills, where they are treated with a humanity that tends to conciliate them to their new and more civilized state. A large proportion of Kayn are, however, still independent. The Birmans have not yet carried sacrilegious invasion to their holy mountain, which probably is not worth acquiring. When a Kayn dies within the jurisdiction of the Birmans, the relations of the deceased always convey the urn, and the image of the departed person, to Gnowa, there to deposit them in hallowed earth. These people have no letters, nor any law, except custom. To this the Birmans prudently leave them, never interfering in their municipal and social economy.

Our curiosity being satisfied, we left Meeaday as soon as the painter had finished the drawings. The country through which we sailed this day had a pleasing appearance; spots of cultivation and frequent towns skirted the river, while small hills clothed with trees rose behind them. We passed in our way through a flock of thirty or forty elephants, who were swimming across the river, carrying their riders on their necks. These were all females, and had been employed in hunting their own species. Males are seldom used by the Birmans for that purpose. Late in the evening we brought to at a small town called Pulloo, where there is a customhouse, having now entered the government of the Prince of Prome.

We got under way early the ensuing morning, and about two o'clock stopped at the lower suburbs of Prome, in the midst of a great concourse of boats. Landing our horses, we rode in the

evening to view the site of a very ancient city, which ages ago was the residence of a dynasty of Pegue kings, before their country had submitted to the Birman yoke. On our right, we left a large temple named Shoe Sanda Praw, situated on an eminence, round the foot of which were several kioums, or monasteries. Pursuing a southerly direction, we came on a level road leading through well cultivated fields, interspersed with groves of tall palmyra trees. We observed the channels of two rivers at this time almost dry, but which in the rainy season roll down an impetuous current from the mountains, and empty their waters into the Irrawaddy. By these streams, teak timber is floated from the forests during the monsoon, and is sold here very cheap. A plank three inches thick, and from sixteen to twenty feet long, may be purchased for a tackal, or half a crown. The soil in the neighbourhood of Prome is remarkably well adapted for gardens, and we met several persons carrying loads of fruit on their heads to market. The evening was far advanced before we reached Yættee, on entering which we passed through an old gateway, that appeared to be narrower, but of greater depth, than any we had yet seen; indeed the ruinous state both of the gateway and the wall rendered it difficult to judge accurately of their dimensions. Within we could distinguish nothing but houses and fields, and it was now too late to explore the antiquities of the place. Two intelligent men, whom we overtook riding along the road, informed us, that it had once been a great fortified city of a square form, each side measuring a space equal to two miles and a half; that it had flourished for several centuries

before the fall of the Pegue monarchy; and that the vestiges of the imperial palace and a large temple were still remaining.

During our ride we observed two caravans of waggons drawn up in a circular form, in the same manner as those we had remarked at Meeaday on our journey to the capital. Here, however, the number of carts was much greater; one of the caravans containing not less than a hundred, which were disposed in two circles, one within the other, presenting a very formidable barrier against the assaults either of men or of wild beasts. They were chiefly loaden with gnapee and salt fish, and had come from a town called Omow, situated on the banks of a lake, where fish is caught in such abundance, as to constitute an article of commercial exportation. The road in this direction seemed to be well made, and much frequented. The Ledegree, or steersman, of Dr Buchanan's boat, who had travelled by land from Prome to Rangoon, a journey of six days, said, that it was equally good the whole way. Timber and stone flags are the principal articles of export trade at Prome.

When the day broke we resumed our journey; the temperature of the air was now extremely pleasant, and the mornings and evenings cool. At sunrise, the quicksilver in the thermometer stood at 67 degrees. In the earlier part of this day, the villages, particularly those on the east bank, had a very inviting appearance, from the orchards of plantain, mango, and other fruit-trees, with which they were surrounded. After passing Peinghee, the country assumed a rougher aspect. The river, at the narrow strait where our boat had been wrecked on the way up, did not now run with

such rapid violence as before. Just above Tir-roupmiou, we passed a large island covered with reeds and brushwood, which the boat people said was much infested by tigers. The handsome town of Kainggain was situated below it. We continued our course till after dark, and passing the lights of the long and populous city of Mayahoun, formerly Loonzay, brought to at the west bank, a little to the southward of the town; but it was too late to think of landing.

Next morning (Nov. 13th) we put off, at an early hour. In the middle of the preceding night I had been alarmed by a scene of discord between the boatmen and my people, which had nearly produced serious consequences. The Birmans have a superstitious abhorrence of any person's passing over them when they are asleep; it is deemed a great indignity, as well as injurious from the apprehended effects of supernatural agency. The boatmen usually slept either on the roof of the boat, or on the platform projecting from the sides, whilst my people occupied the inner part. It happened that in the night, one of the soldiers went out on the platform, and, regardless of the Birmans who were taking their rest, stepped over them without ceremony, most likely ignorant of their prejudice, and perhaps half asleep himself. One of the Birmans, however, chanced unluckily to be awake, who, jumping up, instantly attacked the offender with his fists; a scuffle ensued, attended with no small outcry. The other Birmans rose, and armed themselves with the bamboos that were kept for oar handles. The soldiers flew to their bayonets, and my servants were preparing to take their part. In this state of hostility I came

among them, just time enough to prevent mischief. The Seree of Rangoon and the Ledeggee at length pacified the enraged crew, and I ordered my own people to return to their births. This accident produced no future enmity, and it was the only disagreement that occurred. The Birmans, though sometimes irascible, were in general extremely good tempered, and seldom refused to accommodate the colars (strangers), even at the expense of their own convenience.

We rowed all this day through a country not so well cultivated or so thickly inhabited as that we had passed on the preceding. A little below Shainwah, a considerable branch of the river takes a south-westerly course, leading, we were informed, to Bassien; it is called Keidowa, and sometimes Anou Kioup, or the Western River. The Arracan mountains were visible in the north-west quarter. We brought to after dark, a little above Henzadah, under a reedy bank, from which we were invaded by myriads of troublesome insects.

The following day brought us, without any remarkable incident, to Denoobew. The high bank and beautiful situation of Terriato or Mango village, on the west side, tempted me to go on shore. It is a charming spot. The town is inconsiderable, but the houses are neat and commodious. Denoobew, where we arrived after sunset, is distinguished by a fine temple, and is also celebrated for its manufactory of mats, which are made here in beautiful variety, and superior in quality to what are fabricated in any other part of the empire. Long reeds and grass skirted the banks during the greatest part of this day's journey

From Denoobew to Yangaln Chaingah, the river preserves nearly a direct course. About ten o'clock in the morning of the 15th, we got to the entrance of the Panlang river, where it separates from the great stream, in the same manner as the Hoogly does from the Ganges. The principal branch, pursuing a southerly course, divides, as it approaches the sea, into a number of channels, which are filled by the tide, and are for the most part navigable. The river we now entered is called by various names, Ashay Kioup, or the Eastern River, Panlang River, and Rangoon River, the width of which did not exceed four hundred yards. The eastern bank is within the jurisdiction of Pegue; but the opposite country is included in the province of Dalla, and is governed by a person of a much less dignified title than Maywoon. Through the high reeds which on each side overhung the water, several pathways were made leading to Carrian villages. As we passed, I perceived a watercourse, which my people said came from a lake called Mallatoo. We had now reached the place, where, in going up, we had been so severely teased by mosquitoes, and again felt their venomous influence. They even assailed us in the day-time, and in such numbers, that we were obliged to fortify our legs with boots, and put on thick gloves, whilst by continually flapping with an handkerchief, we endeavoured to defend our faces. But no sooner had darkness commenced, than these troublesome insects redoubled their attacks, in such multitudes, of such a size, and so poisonous, that I am persuaded if an European with a delicate skin were to be exposed uncovered to their ravages for one night, it would nearly prove fatal.

Even the Birman boatmen, whose skins are not easily penetrated, cannot repose within their action ; and my Bengal servants actually cried out in torment. I lay in boots with my clothes on, and a double napkin over my face, and even thus could procure no rest. About nine o'clock we anchored below the town of Panlang, being unable to stem the tide ; and at eleven my people hailed a strange boat coming with the flood, that rowed towards us. Instantly I heard an European voice, to which I had not of late been accustomed, and soon recognised that of Captain Thomas of the Seahorse. I had sent an express when we were at Meeaday, to apprise him of our approach, and desire him to get ready for sea. He had learned from a small vessel that we were at hand, and came thus far to meet us. It being impossible to sleep, we passed the night in conversation. The account he gave of his treatment by the municipal government of Rangoon during my absence, and of the conduct of the Birmans in general towards his crew, was perfectly satisfactory. He had unrigged his ship during the monsoon, and covered the decks with an awning of mats, as a protection against the weather. Being in possession of a tolerably commodious house near the quay, he obligingly offered me a room in it. Of this I availed myself, having no intention to remain at Rangoon longer than was absolutely necessary, and hoped to limit my stay to a very few days. At midnight we got under way, and brought to again at six in the morning. The banks on each side of the river do not indicate much cultivation in its neighbourhood ; but of the state of the interior country we could not judge, being prevented by the bushes

and tall reeds from seeing any distant objects. At ten o'clock the boatmen resumed their labour, and we passed on the left a very miserable village named Teetheet. We were again obliged to anchor on account of the tide, and early on the morning of the 17th of November landed at Rangoon.

CHAPTER X.

IMPERIAL ORDER REGISTERED AT THE RHOOM
—REFLECTIONS ON OUR COMMERCE AND CON-
NEXION WITH THE BIRMAN EMPIRE—RECEIVE
A VISIT FROM THE MAYWOON—ACCOUNT OF
A CARRIAN VILLAGE—BIRMAN GAME OF
CHESS—INSTANCE OF A TRIAL BY ORDEAL—
LETTER FROM THE MAYWOON TO THE GO-
VERNOR-GENERAL—TAKE LEAVE—EMBARK
ON BOARD THE SEAHORSE—VOYAGE TO BEN-
GAL—CONCLUSION.

THE Maywoon of Pegue arrived at Rangoon a few hours after we had landed. I paid him a visit on the following morning, and apprised him of my intention to sail for Bengal in a few days, when he politely said, that he would continue at Rangoon until we departed. He informed me, that the orders for carrying into effect the late regulations would be publicly read and registered at the Rhoom on the following day; and he invited me to send a confidential person to be present at the ceremony; adding, that the records were always open to public inspection, and that whoever chose might at any time procure a copy, by paying a trifling fee to the officer of the court.

It may not be improper, in this stage of my narrative, to offer a few observations on the relative connexion that subsists between the British possessions in India and the Birman empire; to point out the commercial objects that render the intercourse desirable, and the political necessity there is for our preserving such a degree of national influence with that government, as may enable us hereafter to counteract any attempts to diminish our weight, or to erect an alien power, that might eventually injure our interests, and even one day rival our authority. The propriety of discussing a subject of so much moment naturally suggests itself; but a moment's reflection serves to convince us, that it ought not to be passed over in silence. It is too true, that the importance of the objects is hidden only from ourselves. Those against whom it is most incumbent on us to guard, are well apprised of their extent and magnitude; but even were it otherwise, the security which is to arise from the suppression of points of general knowledge, is fallacious and without dignity. Prudence requires that the transactions of a cabinet should not be divulged; but that policy must be very short-sighted which attempts to conceal from the world what every person may discover—the bounties of Providence, the products, resources, and local advantages of a great empire.

British India is more deeply concerned in her commerce and connexion with that part of the Birman empire called Pegue, than many persons, in other respects intimately versed in the affairs of India, seem to be aware. This interest points to three distinct objects; first, to secure from that

quarter regular supplies of timber for ship-building, without which the British marine of India could exist but on a very contracted scale; secondly, to introduce into that country as much of our manufactures as its consumption may require, and to endeavour to find a mart in the south-west dominions of China, by means of the great river of Ava; thirdly, to guard with vigilance against every encroachment or advance which may be made by foreign nations to divert the trade into other channels, and obtain a permanent settlement in a country so contiguous to the capital of our possessions. This last consideration supersedes all others in the magnitude of the consequences that might ultimately result from it.

It is impossible to impress my reader, by any stronger proof, with the vast importance of the Pegue trade, than briefly to state, that a durable vessel * of burden cannot be built in the river of Bengal, except by the aid of teak plank, which is procurable from Pegue alone; and that if the timber trade with that country should, by any act of power, be wrested from us, if it should be lost by misfortune, or forfeited through misconduct, the marine of Calcutta, which of late years has proved a source of unexampled prosperity to our principal settlement, † essentially benefited the parent coun-

* Ships have been constructed of saul wood, and of other indigenous timber of Bengal; but on trial they were not found to be serviceable.

† The following remarkable instance of public spirit will evince the advantages that have already been derived by the parent country from the marine of India, and the benefit that may in future be expected.

In the year 1794, when the horrors of impending famine aggravated the miseries of war, the Secret Commit-

try, and given honourable affluence to individuals, must be reduced nearly to annihilation, without the possibility of our being able to find any adequate substitute for the material of which we should be deprived. Within the last six years, some of the finest merchant ships ever seen in the river Thames have arrived from Calcutta, * where they were built of teak timber; and, after delivering valuable cargoes in London, were usefully employed in the service of the state. Nor would the destruction of the Pegue trade be confined solely, in its effects, to Bengal. The other settlements

tee of the Court of Directors, at the recommendation of his Majesty's ministers, transmitted by express to Lord Teignmouth, then Governor-general of India, intelligence of the calamity that threatened Great Britain, desiring whatever aid the Government of India could supply. On receipt of the despatch, the Governor-general, with that promptitude and energy which distinguished his administration, exerted the influence of government with such effect, that 14,000 tons of shipping, almost entirely India built, were freighted to carry rice to England; and were loaden and cleared from the port of Calcutta in less than five months from the date of the arrival of the letter. This supply, with the exception of the casualties of the sea, arrived most opportunely for the relief of the poor of London, and reduced the price of that excellent article of food to three halfpence a pound. So extraordinary an exertion is neither so widely known, nor so justly appreciated, as it merits. It is a circumstance which reflects the highest credit on all the parties concerned, and deserves to be recorded, in order to declare to posterity the vast resources of Great Britain, which was enabled to draw seasonable supplies of provision for the relief of the metropolis, from colonies situated at the distance of nearly two-thirds of the equatorial circumference of the globe.

* The Cuvera and the Gabriel, built at Calcutta of Pegue timber, are now in the river, and exhibit no contemptible specimens of the naval architecture of India. The port of Calcutta can furnish 40,000 tons of shipping.

would sensibly share in the loss. Madras is supplied from Rangoon with timber for all the common purposes of domestic use; and even Bombay, although the coast of Malabar is its principal storehouse, finds it worth while annually to import a large quantity of planks from Pegue.

But whilst it is advantageous to us to promote the exportation of timber from the maritime towns of Pegue, it is as manifestly our interest to discourage the building of ships in the Rangoon river, where the construction is facilitated by local advantages equal to those of any port in the world, and superior to most. The progress made in this art* by the Birmans has of late years been rapid, and increases in proportion as foreigners can place confidence in the Birman government. When merchants find that they can build with security in the Rangoon river, for one-third less cost than in the Ganges, and for nearly half of what they can at Bombay, few will hesitate in their choice of a place. It is said, that the ships of Pegue are not so firmly constructed as those built in our ports, and in general this assertion is true. But the defect does not arise from want of materials, but because the owners were speculative adventurers, without sufficient funds to defray the charges of labour and of iron, in which material Pegue ships have, by fatal experience, been found deficient.

* The Superb, a very fine ship, which was on the stocks when I was at Rangoon, has lately delivered a valuable cargo in the river Thames. The Laurestone also, a vessel of considerable force, which, I believe, was taken into the French line during the last war, was constructed at the same port.

The shipwrights, however, are as expert as any workmen of the East; and their models, which are all from France, are excellent. The detriment, therefore, that arises to us from the construction of ships at Rangoon, is not less evident than the benefit that we derive from importing the unmanufactured material. The Birmans, sagaciously knowing their own interest, set us an example of policy, by remitting all duty on cordage, canvas, and wrought iron, provided these articles are *bona fide* brought for the equipment of a new vessel. The port charges also are not exacted from a new ship on leaving the river to proceed on her first voyage. A conduct on their part so wise, suggests to us the expediency of adopting some measures for our own interest. An alien duty, or a modified disqualification, would probably, like the acts of Parliament in aid of British navigation, prove the most effectual remedy. Trade cannot be prosecuted in the Indian seas to any extent, except with British ports. Many objections, it is true, may be made to such a proposition; but the good resulting to us would be immediate and certain; whilst the ill consequences, if any there be, are equivocal and remote.

But if we are called upon, by our interest in a commercial point of view, to check the growth of ship-building at Rangoon, how much more important is the subject when seen in a political light? It is a fact which appears to merit some consideration, and is perhaps not generally adverted to, that in a very few years, and at a small comparative expense, a formidable navy may rise on the banks of the Irrawaddy, from the forests of Pegue.

It is probably not known, that artificers * are educating by our enemies for that express purpose, whilst we encourage their progress in the science, by enabling them to derive benefit and acquire experience at the same time. National security, therefore, as well as mercantile advantage, strongly urge a vigilant attention to a quarter whence the means of injury to ourselves may so abundantly be drawn.

The imports into Rangoon from the British settlements, in the year 1794-5, amounted, I was informed, to more than twelve lacks of rupees, about 135,000*l.* sterling. These consisted chiefly of coarse piece goods, glass, hardware, and broad cloth. The demand for the last article, in the year 1795, was considerable. Returns were made almost wholly in timber. A few unimportant commodities are annually carried from Pegue to the coast of Pedier and the Prince of Wales's Island, for the China market. The timber trade, though attended with a certain advantage to the carrier, yet, not producing such large profits as a more hazardous venture to the Eastern straits, to China, and the Malay coast, is seldom prosecuted by merchants of the highest commercial credit, who aim at making a fortune by the success of a single voyage, for which the ship is usually freighted with that valuable and alluring drug opium, so eagerly sought after by the Chinese, yet so strictly prohibited by their government. Owing to this enterprising spirit among merchants in India, a ship is seldom sent to carry wood, except when the owners have not funds to

* The French have long maintained an agent at Rangoon, and are thoroughly acquainted with the advantages which the country of Pegue offers.

provide a more valuable cargo; and this inability frequently extends even to the means of defraying the expense of a lading of timber. Hence the master of a vessel often finds himself embarrassed when on the eve of departure, and the vessel is sometimes detained by legal demands which he cannot discharge. Difficulty produces contention, and provokes bitter and generally groundless invectives against the laws of the country, which though oppressive to the subject, are certainly lenient to foreigners.

Timber for maritime purposes is the only article the Birman empire produces of which we stand in indispensable need; and to promote or encourage the culture and exportation of those commodities, which form the valuable staples of British India, almost all of which the kingdom of Ava is capable of yielding, would operate to the manifest injury of our own provinces. We require, and should seek for nothing more than a mart for our manufactured goods, and, in return, to bring back their unwrought materials. Interference in any other shape appears to be impolitic, and likely, in the end, to prove prejudicial to ourselves.

The maritime ports of this great empire are commodious for shipping, and better situated for Indian commerce than those of any other power. Great Britain possesses the western side of what is called the Bay of Bengal; the government of Ava the eastern; which is far superior to the former in the facilities it affords to navigation. From the mouth of the Ganges to Cape Comorin, the whole range of our continental territory, there is not a single harbour capable of affording shelter to a vessel of five hundred tons burden. It is an un-

broken line of exposed shore, where ships must ride in open roads; but Ava comprehends within her extent of coast three excellent ports—Negrais, the most secure harbour in the bay; Rangoon, and Mergui, each of which is equally convenient, and much more accessible than the river of Bengal, which is the only port in our possession within the bay.

The entrance into the river of Bengal presents as intricate and dangerous a channel as any that is known. And during three months of the year, a ship, in leaving the Ganges, incurs considerable hazard from being obliged to beat against a foul wind, in shoal water, among surrounding sands; but from the harbour of Negrais a ship launches at once into the open bay, and may work to the southward, without any other impediment than what the monsoon opposes. Rangoon, at that particular season, is more perilous than Negrais, especially to vessels bound from the Straits of Malacca, Pulo Penang, and other eastern ports. These, if not well acquainted with the violent current setting at that period to the eastward, are liable to be deceived in their reckoning, and, imagining themselves to be farther west than they really are, sometimes stand too much to the northward, till they get entangled among the shoals of what is called the Bay of Martaban, whence a retreat is very difficult, and where the tide flows with such impetuosity, and rises so high, that anchors are useless, and retard, but for a very short period, the impending fate. Ships sailing from the westward, by making Cape Negrais, and keeping within sight of the coast, until they come near the

bar of Rangoon, avoid those dangers. At every other season Rangoon may be approached, and left, with perfect security. The bar is narrow, and contains depth of water, at three-quarters flood, sufficient for vessels of any burden. The channel of the river is unimpeded, carrying from six to eight fathoms as high as the town of Rangoon.

Blessed with so extraordinary a coincidence of advantages, arising from situation, extent, produce, and climate, the kingdom of Ava, or more properly the Birman empire, is, among Eastern nations, second in importance to China alone, whilst, from its contiguity to British India, it becomes to us of much greater consequence. We can have no reason, in the present prosperous state of our affairs, to dread the hostilities of all the native powers of India combined. Our hereditary foe is destroyed; and there remains no other, who bears towards us any fixed or rooted enmity. The Birmans certainly do not; but, however favourable their natural disposition may be, that characteristic pride and unbounded arrogance which govern their conduct towards other states, may lead them to offer indignity which we cannot avoid resenting, and to commit acts of aggression, as in the affair at Chit-tagong, which we shall be obliged to repel. Such necessity is sincerely to be deprecated. Steadiness and temper in our negotiations, and a reasonable allowance for their mistaken principles, will go far to avert the ill consequences that might arise from their haughty and weak assumption. We cannot expect from a proud and victorious people, impressed with an extravagant opinion of their own power, that reverence which the states of India have been taught to feel for our established cha-

racter. The principal nations to the east of Bengal are to be considered by themselves as a kind of body politic, wholly distinct from all others; and in fact China, Ava, and the countries south of them, compose a body in extent and number of inhabitants, more than equal to all Europe. These nations are connected by a striking similarity of manners and political maxims; to which, as they cannot be suddenly changed, we ought to assimilate, in our intercourse with their governments, as far as the dignity of our own will permit. To preserve a correspondence and a good understanding with the Court of Ava, is essentially expedient for own prosperity; but, for the reasons already stated, that connexion should not be too intimate. A limited trade and a preponderating influence, sufficient to counteract the machinations of our enemies, are the utmost lengths that we should go. By our not interfering farther, the Birmans will be convinced of the moderation and justice of our principles, and learn from them to repel the insidious advances of any other power, made with a latent view to undermine their dominion, and ultimately to wrest their country from them. It is our interest to maintain their independence, and to guard it from foreign encroachment; whilst a knowledge of this truth cannot fail, in the end, to unite the Birman government to ours, in bonds of reciprocal amity and confidence.

During the few days that we continued at Rangoon, I had the pleasure to interchange many reciprocal marks of civility with the Maywoon, who paid me a visit on board the Seahorse; after which we rowed in his war-boat to a very fine ship belonging to him, which had recently been built,

and, he assured me, was entirely the workmanship of native artificers.

Whilst we remained here, Doctor Buchanan, accompanied by one of the officers of the Seahorse, made an excursion on horseback a few miles off, to view a village inhabited by Carians, the simple rural race of people of whom mention has already been made.* Passing by the great temple of Shoe-dagoung, they proceeded along an indifferent road, about three miles, till they arrived at one of the villages which they sought. It contained not more than ten or a dozen houses raised on posts, and disposed in such a manner as to enclose a square yard, in which were a number of buffaloes. The head man was gone to a distant village; but one of the inhabitants invited the strangers to enter his dwelling, and hospitably offered what his house afforded. The visitants ascended a narrow ladder about twelve feet high into a sort of barn, divided into two by a mat partition. The floor was of rough boards, the sides of mats, and a roof, composed of bamboos, was covered with thatch. At night they drew up the ladder, and closing the door, sleep secure from the assaults of wild beasts, or the depredations of thieves. Seven or eight men, as many women, and several children, constituted a numerous family. They seemed a healthy and vigorous race of people, and were of a fairer complexion than the generality of southern Birman. Some of the women wore rich strings of coral round their necks, and were even adorned with ornaments of gold and silver. They speak a dialect peculiar to themselves, but their language is radically the same as the Birman. There are

* See Vol. I. p. 242.

both Pegue and Birman Carianers, who differ in the same degree as the nations to which they are attached. They complain of being oppressed by the Birmans; but their appearance did not indicate severe oppression, and they have a certain sale for whatever their industry can raise. Doctor Buchanan saw several Carianers on the road carrying baskets; some going for the produce of their gardens, others returning with burdens of fruit and vegetables. The life these people lead is truly pastoral. They have no other business or object except that of cultivating the soil, and tending their flocks. Their religion is the worship of Gaudma; but in these rites they do not join with the same fervour that animates the Birmans; they rather seem to acquiesce in the doctrines of their conquerors, which they do not even profess to understand.

Dr Buchanan interrogated one of the men, who admitted their want of knowledge, and assigned as the reason, that God once wrote his laws and commands on the skin of a buffalo, and called upon all nations of the earth to come and take a copy—a summons which all obeyed except the Carianers, who had not leisure, being occupied in the business of husbandry; and that, in consequence of this neglect, they remained ever since in a state of ignorance, without any other cares than those which related to their pastoral employment. On going away Dr Buchanan offered them a few pieces of silver, which so excited their surprise, being quite unaccustomed to such acts of liberality, that they hesitated to receive the money, and seemed at a loss to what motive to ascribe his bounty. After looking at one another, and talking for a minute

or two with much earnestness, the women, on a sudden, as if his design had just been discovered, all ran away laughing, whilst the men sullenly declined the gift. In fact, they concluded that the Doctor wanted to purchase the favours of one of their females, having no notion of a disinterested donation. The ladies, however, did not wait to ascertain for whom the golden apple was designed, and it was in vain he tried to convince the men that their suspicions were ill founded. These poor people entertain a delicacy in regard to women, which their more enlightened conquerors do not feel. To prove the purity of his intentions, however, the Doctor left the money on the floor when he departed. The gentlemen returned by the same road, and in their way examined a mineral spring in the neighbourhood of the great Pagoda.

I had an opportunity, at Rangoon, of observing that the Birmans of distinction played at chess, a circumstance which, from our secluded situation at the capital, had escaped my notice. This game is held in high estimation among the superior ranks. The board they use is exactly similar to ours, containing 64 squares, and their number of troops the same, 16 on each side; but the names, the power and disposal of them, differ essentially. The king and his minister (a queen is never introduced by the Orientals) are mounted on elephants. These are defended by two castles or yettay, two knights on horseback, Mene, two officers on foot, one called Meem, the other Chekéy, and eight Maundelay or foot-soldiers. The forces of each party are arranged on three lines, by which eight squares remain unoccupied. None of the pieces possess equal force with our queen; and this restricted

operation renders the Birman mode of playing more complex and difficult than ours. The Birmans affirm, that it is a game of high antiquity, and that it is acknowledged and authorized by their sacred writings, although every play of chance is prohibited. This testimony confirms * the opinion of the late Sir William Jones, that chess was invented in India, and is not, as generally imagined, of Persian origin. The Birmans call it Chedreen, a word that bears some resemblance to the name which is given to the game in most other parts of the world.

During the time that the English deputation was at Ummerapoorra, Captain Thomas witnessed at Rangoon a remarkable instance of a trial by the ordeal of water, the circumstances of which he thus related to me :—Two women of the middling class litigated a small property before the court of justice ; and as the judges found great difficulty in deciding the question of right, it was at length agreed, by mutual consent, to put the matter to the issue of an ordeal. The parties, attended by the officers of the court, several Rhahaans, or priests, and a vast concourse of people, repaired to a tank or pond, in the vicinity of the town. After praying to the Rhahaans for some time, and performing certain purificatory ceremonies, the litigants entered the pond, and waded in it, till the water reached their breasts. They were accompanied by two or three men, one of whom placing the women close to each other, and putting a board on their heads, at a signal given, pressed upon the

* See a paper on the Indian Game of Chess by the President of the Asiatic Society, in the 2d vol. of Asiatic Researches.

board till he immersed them both at the same instant. They remained out of sight about a minute and a half, when one of them, nearly suffocated, raised her head, whilst the other continued to sit upon her hams at the bottom, but was immediately lifted up by the men; after which an officer of the court solemnly pronounced judgment in her favour; and of the justice of this decision none of the by-standers appear to entertain the smallest doubt, from the infallibility of the proof which had been given.

The trial by ordeal, in all countries where the Hindoo religion prevails, is as ancient as their records. The late Ali Ibrahim Khan, native chief magistrate of Benares, has communicated, in a very curious paper, * the modes by which this appeal to the Deity is made, as they are described in the *Metaschera*, or *Comment on the Dherma Sastra*, in the chapter on Oaths. The Birmans, being governed by the same authority, observe nearly similar forms; but as knowledge increases, and mankind become more enlightened, these absurd practices lose ground, and have of late years been discountenanced by the judicial courts both of India and of Ava.

Previous to our departure, the Maywoon of Pegue delivered to my care a letter addressed to the Governor-general of India, couched in very friendly terms, but dictated in the usual style of turgid extravagance. He enumerated in it the concessions granted in favour of English commerce, and expressed a determination to execute his part

* This paper was presented to the Asiatic Society by Warren Hastings, Esq. See "On the Trial by Ordeal among the Hindoos," *Asiat. Research. Vol. I.*

with punctuality and attention. His Birman Majesty has long entertained a desire to procure an English carriage, with the distinctions of Birman royalty attached to it. In this letter the Maywoon made a request that such a one might be sent; and in order to direct the artist, I was furnished with a very intelligible and well executed drawing, * performed at Ummerapoorra, by the King's painter. It displayed the carriage and body of an English crane-necked chariot, gilded all over. From the top of the body there rose a regal spire, or piasath, in separate stages, bearing a miniature resemblance to those which ornamented the palace and royal barge. Four lions in a crouching attitude guarded the carriage, two on the fore part, and two behind; and a bird, designed, I imagine, to represent the Henza, or tutelary goose, was placed in front with expanded wings. The Maywoon's letter, however, contained a requisition of yet greater importance; which was, to obtain materials for the establishment of a mint—a design which, if carried into effect, † must considerably promote the prosperity of the country, as the ne-

* The European part of this drawing was made from an old carriage which had been introduced into the Ava country several years before. The Governor-general complied with both the requests contained in the Maywoon's letter; and, in the following year, sent a very superb chariot to his Birman majesty, constructed according to the representation. The top of the spire, notwithstanding the body hung very low, was 18 feet from the ground. It was extremely rich and well executed.

† It is surprising that the Chinese have no national coin. At the port of Canton, dollars in some measure supply the deficiency; but in the interior of the kingdom, the inconvenience must be generally felt.

cessity of weighing lumps of lead and silver, and ascertaining the purity, operate as a sensible impediment to commerce.

On the 26th of November, the day preceding that of our embarkation, I waited on the May-woon, accompanied by the gentlemen of the deputation and Captain Thomas, to take our final leave. I had occasion to feel myself individually obliged to him for his personal attentions, whilst his mild administration and pleasing manners had acquired my esteem. He is universally acknowledged to be a good man, and seems highly to deserve that reputation. I had opportunities of witnessing several instances of his benevolence and humanity; and, although his authority within his own jurisdiction is absolute, I never heard him accused of an abuse of his power, or of a single act of oppression or injustice. Such a character, in a country where the most rigorous and often barbarous despotism prevails, is entitled to particular encomium. We parted with mutual, and, I am inclined to believe, not insincere professions of permanent good will.

On the morning of the 27th, we breakfasted on board the Seahorse. Most of the attendants, with our heavy baggage, had embarked on the preceding day, and at ten o'clock we weighed anchor. It had previously been agreed, that the Company's ship should salute the Birman flag with eleven guns, which were to be answered by an equal number from the battery on shore. Captain Thomas performed his part of the agreement; but the battery, which was very slow in acknowledging the compliment, returned only seven. This apparent mark of disrespect, which could not be attributed to ig-

norance, I conceived rather to originate in the person who had charge of the battery, and who might think to recommend himself by it, than from any higher authority. It was, however, such an ostensible and public slight to the Company's colours, that I judged it expedient to write a note to the Maywoon, to acquaint him of the fact.

We dropped down with the ebb as far as the Chokey, or watch station, from whence the customhouse officer visited the Seahorse on her first arrival. In passing the mouth of the Pegue river, we observed that, at the entrance, it was nearly as wide as the great river; but that breadth soon diminishes to a very contracted space. Several large creeks branched off both to the right and the left, which the pilot said were navigable to a considerable distance by boats of heavy burden. In the evening we again weighed, and crossed the bar at midnight. Early next morning we saw the landmark called the Elephant, and, favoured by the ebb, passed the China Bakir river. The wind not being strong enough, when the tide turned, to enable us to stem the flood, we again came to anchor, being in company with a ship named the Hope, bound also to Calcutta. On the following morning we stood to the southward on the first of the ebb, which bore us along with it against an unfavourable breeze. On the 30th we made Diamond Island and Cape Negrais, and next day at an early hour passed a ship standing towards Rangoon, which appeared to have suffered severely from a recent storm, having lost her main-top and fore-top-gallant masts. The wind was at this time north north-west, and a heavy swell from the same quarter indicated that there had lately been a hard

gale, a very unusual circumstance at that season of the year.

Keeping within a few leagues of the coast, we continued to beat against an unfavourable wind until the 9th of December, when we made Cheduba, a fertile island belonging to the Birman government. The channel between this island and the main is annually navigated by large trading boats, but it does not afford a safe passage for shipping. The length of the island we judged to be about 45 miles. It yields abundance of rice, and is governed by a Chekey, or lieutenant, who is subject to the Maywoon of Arracan. Having now the benefit of regular land and sea breezes, we were enabled to make some progress to the northward. On the morning of the 11th we saw what are called the Broken Islands, on the coast of Arracan, which are for the most part a barren assemblage of rocky eminences, affording shelter only to pirates and thieves. On the 12th and 13th we experienced much inconvenience, the wind, which was directly against us, blowing with such violence, that the ship laboured greatly, and our fore-top-sail was torn from the yard. On the 14th the weather moderated, and, the wind veering a little to the eastward, we had the good fortune on the 16th to discover a pilot schooner at anchor, between the eastern and western reefs near the mouth of the Ganges. Neap tides prevailing, our passage up the river was tedious, and the wind coming invariably from the northern quarter, rendered it hazardous to proceed by night. On the 22d we reached Budge Budge, where I found a pulwar *

* A commodious kind of boat used in the river Ganges.

waiting, which my friend Captain Sandys, as soon as he heard of the arrival of the Seahorse, had despatched to meet me. At this place I quitted the ship, and in two hours reached Calcutta, after an eventful absence of ten months.

END OF THE EMBASSY TO AVA.

Symes, Michael

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